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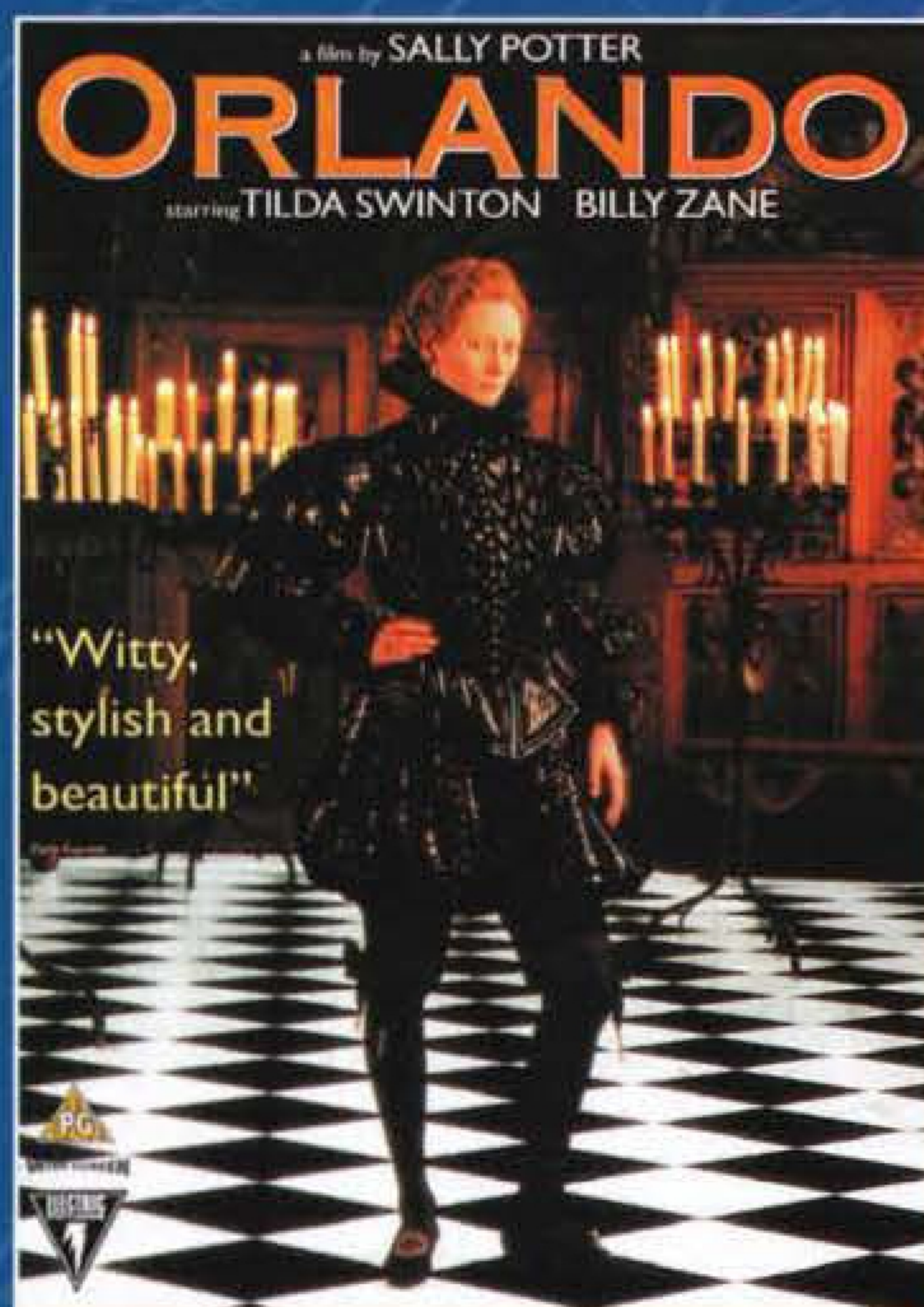
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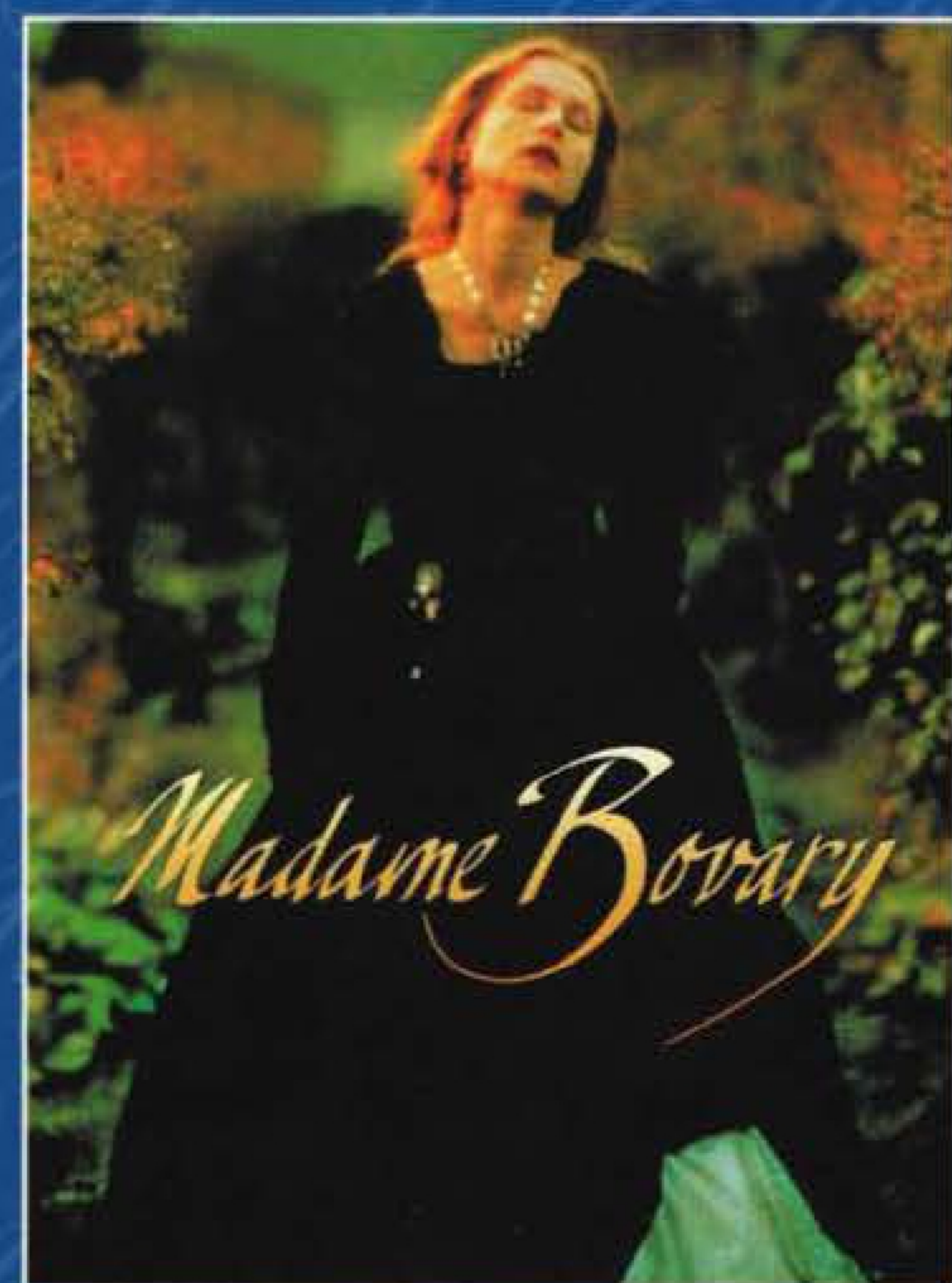
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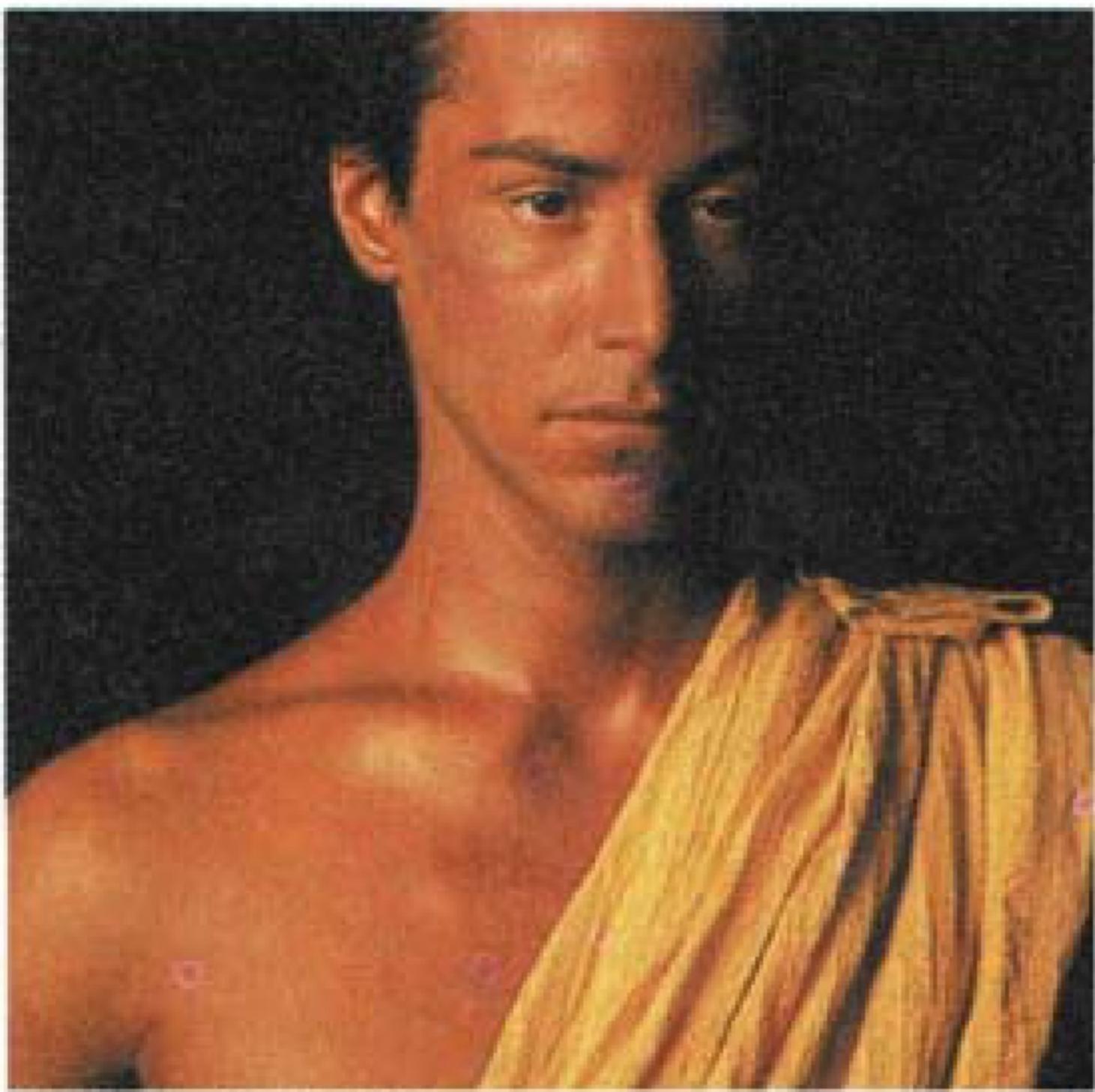
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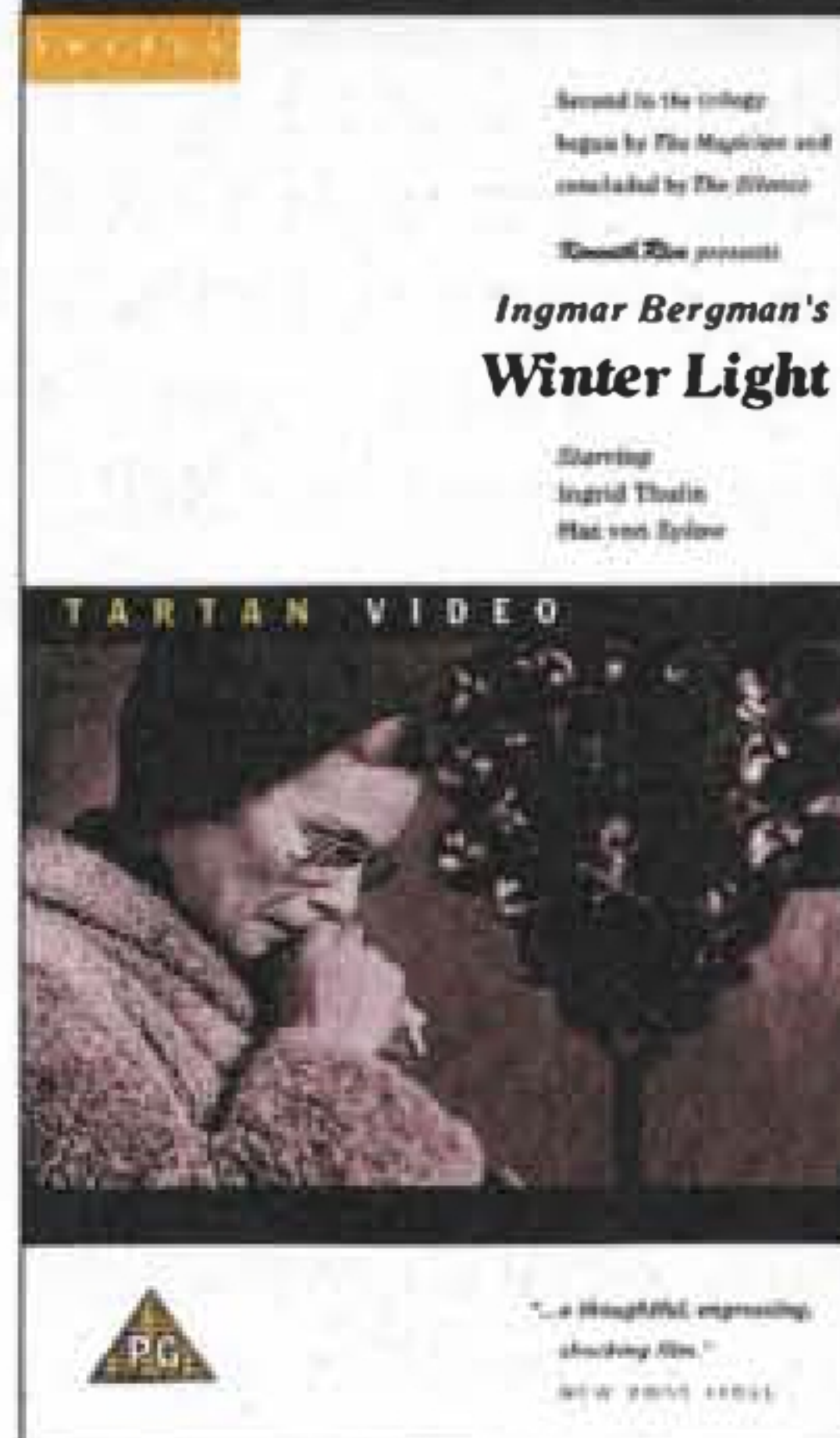
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By the time you are reading this page the Oscars will have been awarded. We are not going to risk any predictions about who will get them. One thing, however, is certain. The clutch of British nominations will have provided the occasion for upbeat columnists to wax lyrical on the coming revival of the British film industry and downbeat ones to lament the fact that with so much talent, the industry has sunk so far.

All such comment should be taken with a strong pinch of salt. With its tinselly patriotism, artificially raised hopes and nostalgia for a time that never was, much of the discussion on the prospects for British film has always displayed many of the same traits as the recent national anguish over Torvill and Dean. That said, movies are a good deal more important than ice dancing, both economically and culturally. And this year there are signs that the government might be about to do something about it.

The recent public pronouncements of National Heritage Secretary Peter Brooke have shown a distinct shift in tone towards intervention. The GATT negotiations, he explained in February, established that "the audio visual sector is not just a matter of trade. It carries within it the cultural, linguistic and political aspirations of the different nations within Europe." For several years plans for boosting British film production have shuffled their way around Whitehall to no avail. Now the word is that Brooke is at long last going to announce some specific measures to help the industry. And to stiffen his resolve, an industry-based campaign has just been launched.

All this has to be welcomed. But two very big question marks remain. Even in its new mood, does the government have sufficient resolve to do anything that will make a difference? And are those of us who do want to put the British film industry show on the road at all clear about what sort of show we are after?

One key test of Peter Brooke's seriousness is his approach to enforcing in Britain the EC's television programme quotas. These say that 50 per cent of programmes on any channel should be European. Television money is important for film. And if subscription movie channels simply show Hollywood product, then none of their subscriptions will feed, however indirectly, new British (or other European) production.

Quotas provide a weapon for the government to

bully the movie channels into providing more money for domestic film production. Yet for two years the British government has not used them. It has written to movie channels saying "the quotas don't apply to you." Now the National Heritage Department is supposed to be reviewing how satellite and cable channels can move towards fulfilling the quotas. We should watch sharply for what it comes out with. BSkyB has recently come to an agreement with British Screen to put money into films in return for pay TV rights. But this deal will probably bring only a little new money to British film. If the department's review simply ends up patting BSkyB on the head for its British Screen arrangement, then it won't have achieved very much. To get new money from satellite subscription means Brooke setting tougher targets.

The same goes for fiscal incentives for British film production. Subsidy has always been a dirty word for this government, and it seems to have persuaded the film industry to share its view. So whatever fiscal incentives it comes out with are likely to be "at no cost to the Treasury". If so, then the fiscal incentives are unlikely to be effective.

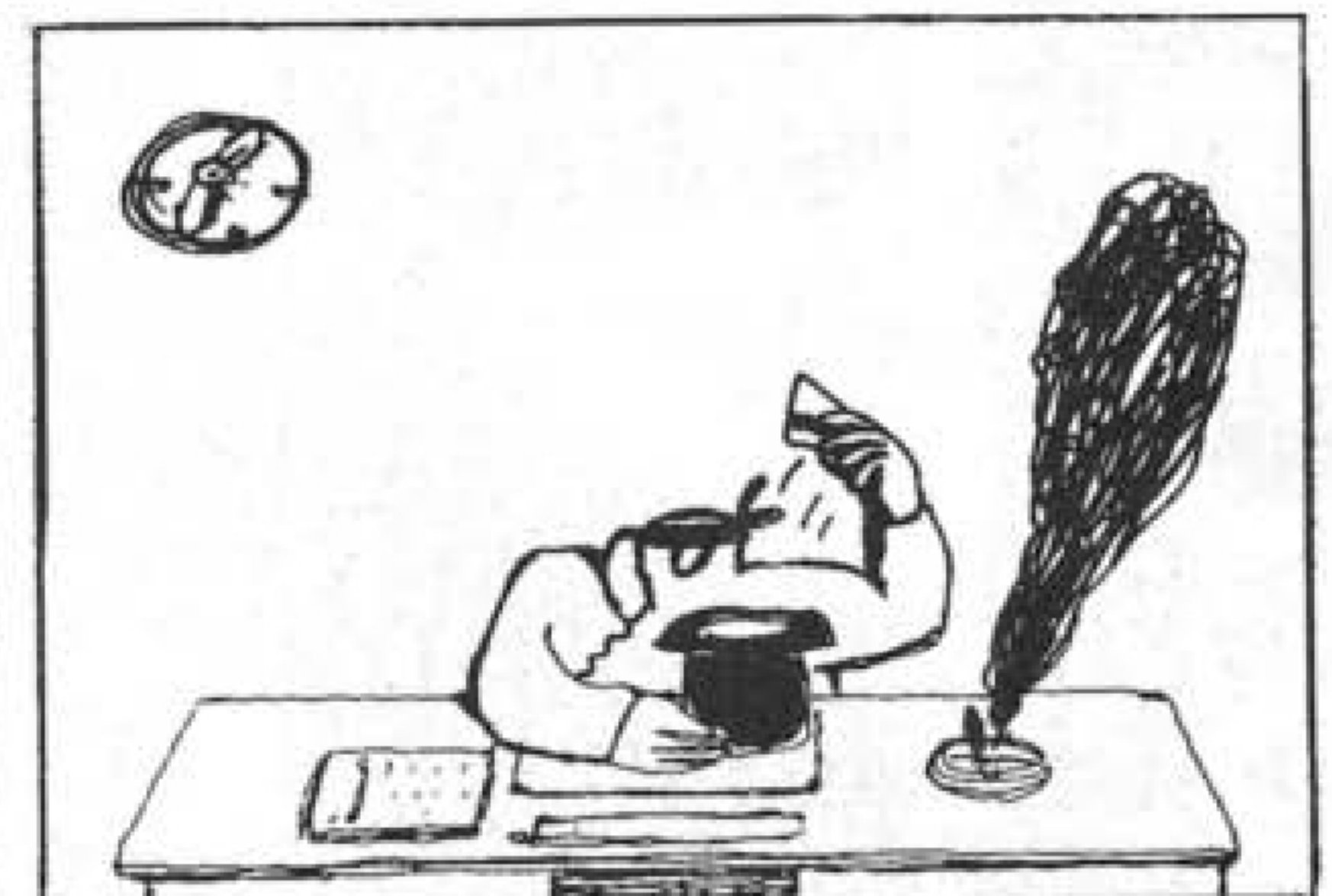
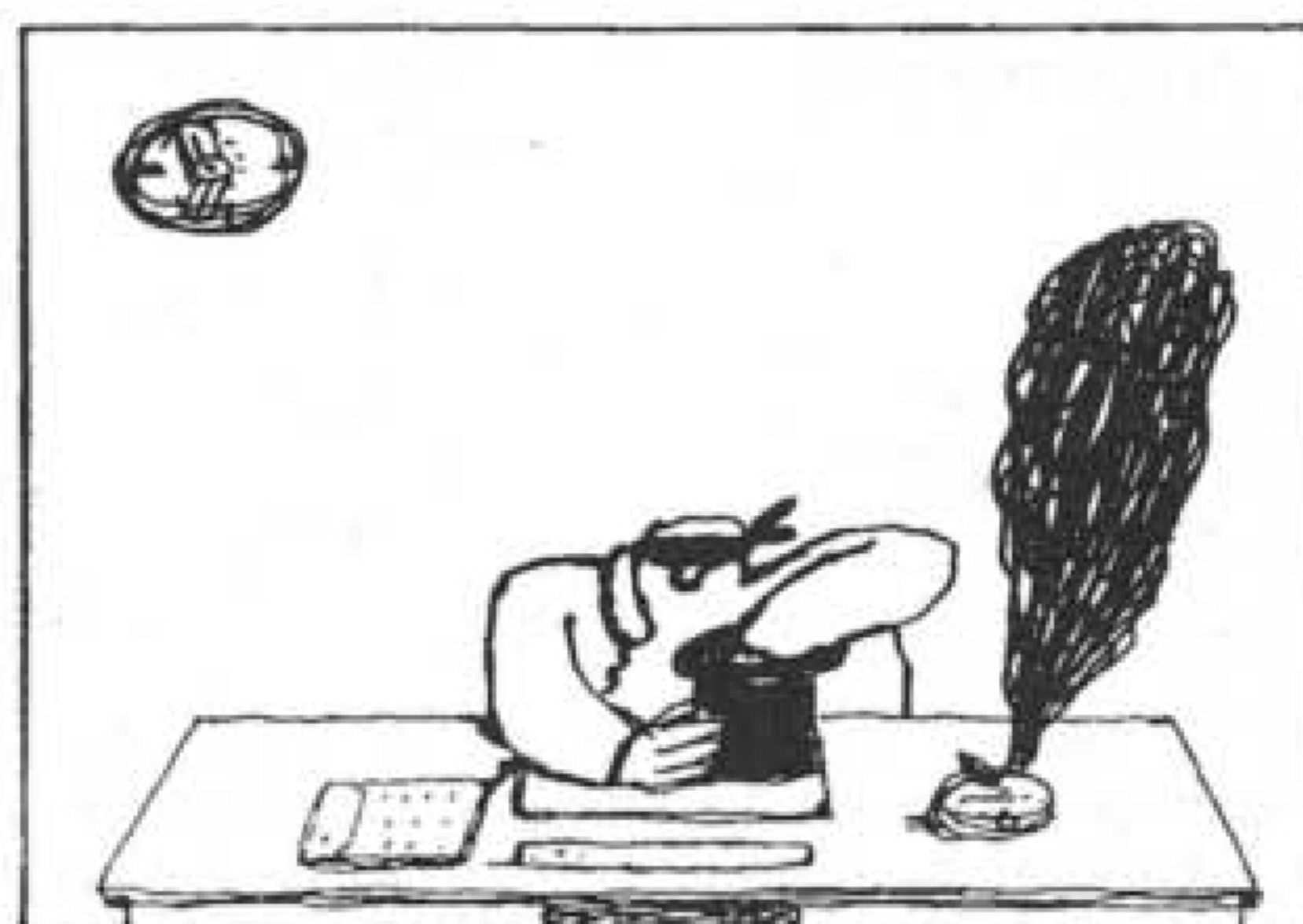
But even if Peter Brooke reveals new measures that inject substantial sums of money into British film production, we are left with the problem of what sort of film industry we are trying to build? Is it to be an industry taking a slice of the Hollywood action – with budgets, subjects and stars to match? Or is it to be an industry which produces a larger number of lower-budget films – films that have the potential for cultural innovation and speak directly and, if necessary, exclusively to a domestic audience?

Some deny that we are faced with a dilemma. Create a successful British outpost of Hollywood, they argue, and the resources for the lower-budget independent movies will follow. It would be nice if they were right. But it sounds a bit too much like a cinema version of the once fashionable but now discredited 'trickle down' theory. It also makes the by no means obvious assumption that a British film industry based on big-budget movies is a more viable economic proposition than one based on small ones.

To change the fortunes of the British film industry will require more financial muscle from the government, more strategic brains from the industry and a good deal less nostalgia from all of us.

JERRY ON LINE #1

Peter Lydon – James Sillavan ©



'Oh yes Jerry, as an Academy voter I try and see all the nominated films. I feel that's important. Then when it comes to making a choice, I rely on good old gut reaction... failing that I use a method that er, I can't really discuss over the phone'.

The business

Here's a variation on all those how-many-lawyers-does-it-take-to-change-a-lightbulb jokes. It has to do with how many scriptwriters might be needed to transform a television series with vestigial characterisation, a catchy signature tune and a predilection for simple storylines into a major motion picture.

The television series, of course, is 'The Flintstones', whose big-screen version – starring John Goodman as Fred, Rick Moranis as Barney Rubble and Elizabeth Perkins as Wilma, with a cameo from Elizabeth Taylor – is this summer's bid for busting box-office blocks in the feelgood category. The film has been in production for every bit as long as the trailers (which started last summer) suggest, and you can expect the promotional build-up to go into overdrive anytime now. All in all, it sounds like the ultimate high-concept movie, with the scriptwriting process requiring little more than some judicious dovetailing of the familiar elements.

Wrong. At last count, 35 (no, that's not a typo) writers had worked on the project, beginning with a first draft in September, 1987, from one writer, followed by another five involving a further seven highly paid professionals, until the studio decided it didn't like the approach.

So in June 1992 everything went back to square one with Michael Wilson's four-page story outline. This engendered two drafts (both by the same two-man writing team), an "ideas meeting" (five writers), a fourth draft (one of the five "ideas" people plus seven new writers), a revision (three of the previous eight writers, plus four new ones), another revision (four previous contributors – not necessarily those most recently involved – plus three new ones), another revision (some of the above), another revision entirely (two old writers, three new ones), plus a final 'polish' by writers nos. 34 and 35.

The Screenwriters' Guild, meanwhile, is locked in negotiations to try to sort out the screen credit, since it has a rule that unless it has given prior permission, no more than three writers may receive screen credit on anyone film. Presumably that is because someone, long, long ago when we weren't as sophisticated as we are now, was keen to discourage the idea that writing could be done by a committee.

● The death earlier this year of Samuel Bronston, the man behind all those big-budget, made-in-Spain American movies of the 60s and early 70s, prompted Mr Busy to reflect on what progress, if any, has been made in developing European studios – particularly those further to the east – as low-cost locations for international movie-making. After all, the dawning of the new capitalist millennium east of the Elbe has had precious few other benefits for the film-makers of the region, where the familiar cycle of cultural democratisation has been played out more or less everywhere: first, make all the films you couldn't make before; next, make all the B-grade action films someone told you would sell abroad and find out they



Right said Fred: John Goodman as Fred Flintstone at last looks ready for the big screen

don't; third, make films about the horrors of life in post-revolutionary economic collapse and discover that your compatriots consider living through it is bad enough without having to watch it in films too.

Alas, news on the location front is not much better. Leaving aside the big, established studios like Pinewood, Bavaria and Cinecittà, the brave hopes of a new production infrastructure have not been fulfilled.

In the west, the muddy if amply proportioned field to the north of Madrid which was to be the Ciudad de la Imagen is still some way off being a thriving production centre, while some of the smaller, older studios such as Nice's La Victorine and Rome's Pathé remain locked in change-of-ownership restructuring. And following an attempt to bring its prices into line with those charged in the west – a process which began some time before the break-up of Czechoslovakia and reportedly involved a tripling of the rates – Prague's Barrandov has seen the number of foreign productions shooting there decline dramatically. In Russia, meanwhile, Mosfilm – despite the building of a state-of-the-art post-production facility in the last days of the Gorbachev era – is

nowhere near as popular as it used to be, and Lenfilm is grappling with one financial crisis after another.

Finally, the massive Studio Babelsberg in Potsdam just outside Berlin, once the flagship of East German production but now – considerably trimmed and partly refurbished – under German/French private ownership, recently saw the defection of a major French production that would have occupied its biggest stage for 11 weeks. Recent films to shoot at Babelsberg have included *The Neverending Story III* (not surprisingly, since producer Dieter Geissler's special effects unit is based there) and the Roger Spottiswoode-directed *Mesmer*.

Last October there was much jubilation in Potsdam about the imminent arrival of French producer Claudie Ossard and the *Delicatessen* team of Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro with their new film, tentatively titled *La Ville des enfants perdus*. At the turn of the year, however, Ossard and company pulled out, blaming alleged last-minute price increases and the imposition of executive producer credits. The Jeunet-Caro film will now shoot at Les Studios 91 at Arpajon, south of Paris, with production due to start some time this month.

One of the more sickening aspects of February's Berlin Film Festival was the pretence entered into by all concerned that the diminutive and belligerent Jack Valenti – former adviser to LBJ and for many years head of the Motion Picture Association of America – was somehow a star. To say that Valenti himself went along with this pretence would be an understatement.

Following his failure to get movies and television programmes included in the recently concluded round of GATT negotiations, Valenti arrived from the Monte Carlo TV market and made sure that everyone knew he was in a conciliatory mood, wishing to build bridges between the US and Europe. What this involved was telling everyone basic home truths about film production, such as the one that suggests that if you make a film people want to see, you will not have difficulty finding an audience – a belief that could save Hollywood some \$8 million per film in advertising costs.

For the rest of the time, Valenti swanned around in an oversized limousine, of the sort usually reserved for presidents, barking sound bites at the assembled newsmen. One slightly more gratifying aspect of the affair was that when Berlin director Moritz De Hadeln announced Valenti's imminent arrival at the festival's opening night, a substantial proportion of the audience (which being there largely by invitation could hardly be said to have been riddled with radicals) booed.

● Oops. Seems like Mr Busy was a little premature last month in announcing that Barry Diller's QVC Shopping Channel had finally acquired Paramount Pictures (to be fair, I only said it "looked as though" it would). Since then, Sumner Redstone's Viacom has increased its cash offer (QVC's was a complex mixture of cash and stock) and taken control of the studio.

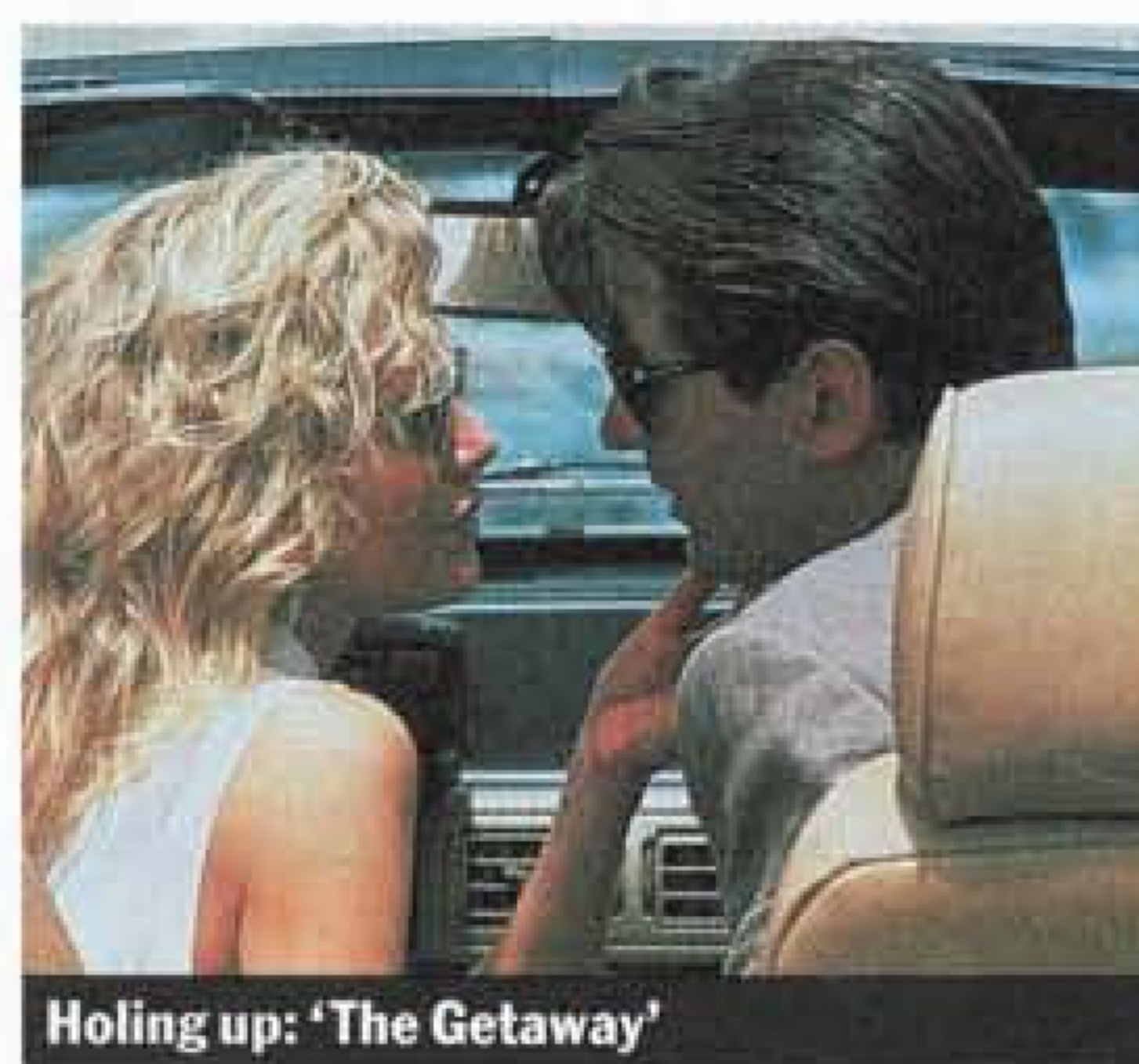
The whole process, meanwhile, has been so absurdly protracted and distinctly undignified that it has already had that quintessentially 90s cliché attached to it and has been dubbed "The deal from hell" in US financial circles.

Is their method in their marketing? Universal has been much praised in the US for the gradual 'widening' of the release pattern on Steven Spielberg's 'Schindler's List'. But a shortage of black and white film stock may have had at least something to do with it.

Existing labs could reportedly handle only about 100 prints a week of Spielberg's epic (a US-wide release can require up to 2,500 prints), and Spielberg refused to allow the usual stand-by of printing black and white on colour stock because some of the definition would be lost. However, since the film contains several colour sequences, these had to be cut into each black and white print by hand. Result: the maximum daily output of 'Schindler's List' prints was eight.

And the outcome wasn't entirely peerless, either. Since modern black and white stock is apparently thinner than its colour equivalent, it is more likely to warp, get stuck in the projector (because it is also less slippery) and scratch. Result: a large number of complaints about poor-quality prints of what was being touted as a masterpiece of film craft.

At the time of writing, pressure on Spielberg was mounting to allow prints to be made on colour stock. So far, he is refusing.



● Forget the rumoured reunion of the Beatles or this summer's promised world tour by a reunited Eagles: Italian cinema is about to see the re-pairing, for the first time in seven years, of the inimitable Spaghetti Western duo of Bud Spencer and Terence Hill. The Man who was Trinity and the Fat One with the Beard are to team up again in an adaptation of *Don Quixote* which

will see the Spanish knight and his trusty squire miraculously spirited into the late twentieth century.

Could it be that someone in Italy has heard of a film called *Les visiteurs*? Long-time readers of this column may recall discussion of all the naughty bits that were trimmed from 'Sliver' before it was released in the US. Well, what I didn't mention at the time (because I didn't know it) was that quite a few of those bits found their way back into the film before its European opening – which may have something to do with the fact that it did rather better over here than over there.

Now the same thing is due to happen to 'The Getaway' – Roger Donaldson's remake of Sam Peckinpah's 1972 thriller in which Alec Baldwin co-stars with his wife Kim Basinger. In case you've forgotten, the basic formula of the film is hole up somewhere, run for it, hole up somewhere, run for it (repeat as many times as necessary).

Well, the original cut of the film included a lot more detail on what the couple did while holing up here and there than American audiences were shown when the film opened in the US in February. We lucky Europeans will apparently get some of it back. Doesn't it make you proud to be a foreigner?

● Given the number of films that seem to be conceived in a few moments, shot in a few months and sit in the top ten for ages, it is vaguely reassuring to note a trend in the opposite direction among documentary-makers, where a surprisingly large number of films are being made over three, four or even more years. One of the surprise hits at last January's Sundance Festival was *Hoop Dreams*, a long (174-minute) chronicle of four and a half years in the life of two black kids from inner-city Chicago and their struggle to make it into the world of professional basketball.

At much the same time as the Chicago film-makers were working on their movie, a similar project was being undertaken on a totally different subject by Swedish director Donya Feuer. The result was *Dansaren* (*The Dancer*) – shown in the Panorama in Berlin – which follows the crucial years between 13 and 21 in the life of Swedish ballerina Katja Björner.

But the prize for endurance must surely go to Russian director Nikita Mikhalkov, whose stunning record of his daughter's hopes and dreams, *Anna 6-18* (also on show in Berlin), put regular interviews with Anna M together with contemporary newsreel and television footage.

In the early years, Mikhalkov had to make do with reel ends of film 'borrowed' from the studio (he was at one stage almost prosecuted for unauthorised use of state-owned film stock). At the end, however, he needed French capital to complete the project. Anna wasn't the only one to have undergone major changes over the years it took her dad to make the film.

BERLIN NOTES

Down and out

Introducing Marek Piowski's *The Cruise* (*Rejs*, 1968/70) at its first screening in the Forum of Young Cinema, Ulrich Gregor sounded a note that resonated throughout the Berlin Festival. He and his committee had chosen this old film, he explained, partly because it was a cult movie in Poland that remained virtually unknown abroad, and partly because it was so much better than any new Polish film they had seen. Well, yes. *The Cruise* (which lost 22 unrestorable minutes to the Polish censors in 1970, but still has a terrific kick in its satires of Polish politics and cultural pretensions) actually looked a lot better than 90 per cent of the new films in all sections of the Berlin programme. In other words, all the clichés held good: the state of world cinema in 1994 is tired and listless, European cinema in particular is still dancing on the spot, and creative energy has devolved to racial, sexual and other minorities. More bad news for Mr Jones.

The competition jury, headed by Jeremy Thomas, showed a keen sense of nostalgia for the days of 'vital issues' in awarding its main prizes to films like *In the Name of the Father*, *Ladybird*, *Ladybird* and *Philadelphia*. (It's hard to identify the issue in question in the case of *Ladybird*, *Ladybird*, since Ken Loach says that the social workers seen snatching babies from an 'unfit' mother are not to be taken as villains; but the film is a barnstorming return to the hysterics of *Cathy Come Home* and generates powerful feelings of undirected anger in the way that 'issue' movies used to.) The jury also liked Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Juan



Carlos Tabío's *Strawberries and Chocolate* (*Fresa y chocolate*, Cuba), which replays the central gestalt of *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (communist militant softened by contact with raging queen) but reverses its dynamic by making the queen the intelligent one. (It also plays safe by omitting the sex.) The only jury decision unpopular with the Berlin press was Kieślowski's prize for Best Director, but that seemed more a reaction to the cynicism and sarcasm displayed by the director in his press conference than to the film itself: *Three Colours: White*, a black comedy in the vein of *Decalogue 10*, which audiences recognised as the only film in sight with its finger on the pulse of Europe today.

The only real surprise in competition was Chang Sun-Woo's *HwaOmKyung* (*Hwaomgyong*, South Korea), which tests a Buddhist fable

derived from a fifth-century BC sutra against the (often horrific) social realities of Korea in the 90s, with mysterious and fairly seriously disturbing results. A few other East Asian films matched this level of creative initiative. Wang Xiaoshuai's *The Days* (*Dong-Chun de Rizi*, China), which I wrote about briefly in *Sight and Sound* last year after seeing it in rough-cut, has turned out to be a curiously cheering account of the "everyday madness" that afflicts independent-minded people in present-day China; the director's own wry narration, half engaged, half detached, lifts the story of a disintegrating relationship out of the realm of easy angst. And He Ping's *Red Firecracker, Green Firecracker* (*Paoda Shuangdeng*, China) makes startling use of pyrotechnic imagery to add danger to an otherwise routine tale of forbidden love.

Just two western movies stood out from the ruck, both of them inspired first features. Patrick Keiller's *London* is the brightest sign of life in British cinema since early Greenaway: a non-fiction image-track meets a highly fictional (not to say aggressively polemic) soundtrack in a superbly literate, Borgesian narrative that runs literal rings around the decline of London under Tory government. And Rose Troche's *Go Fish* (US) has the distinction of being the first-ever street-level dyke movie: a mini-panorama of lesbian lives and loves that's not only free of all romantic bullshit but also endearingly committed to an informal view of the world as no man will ever see it. Tony Rayns



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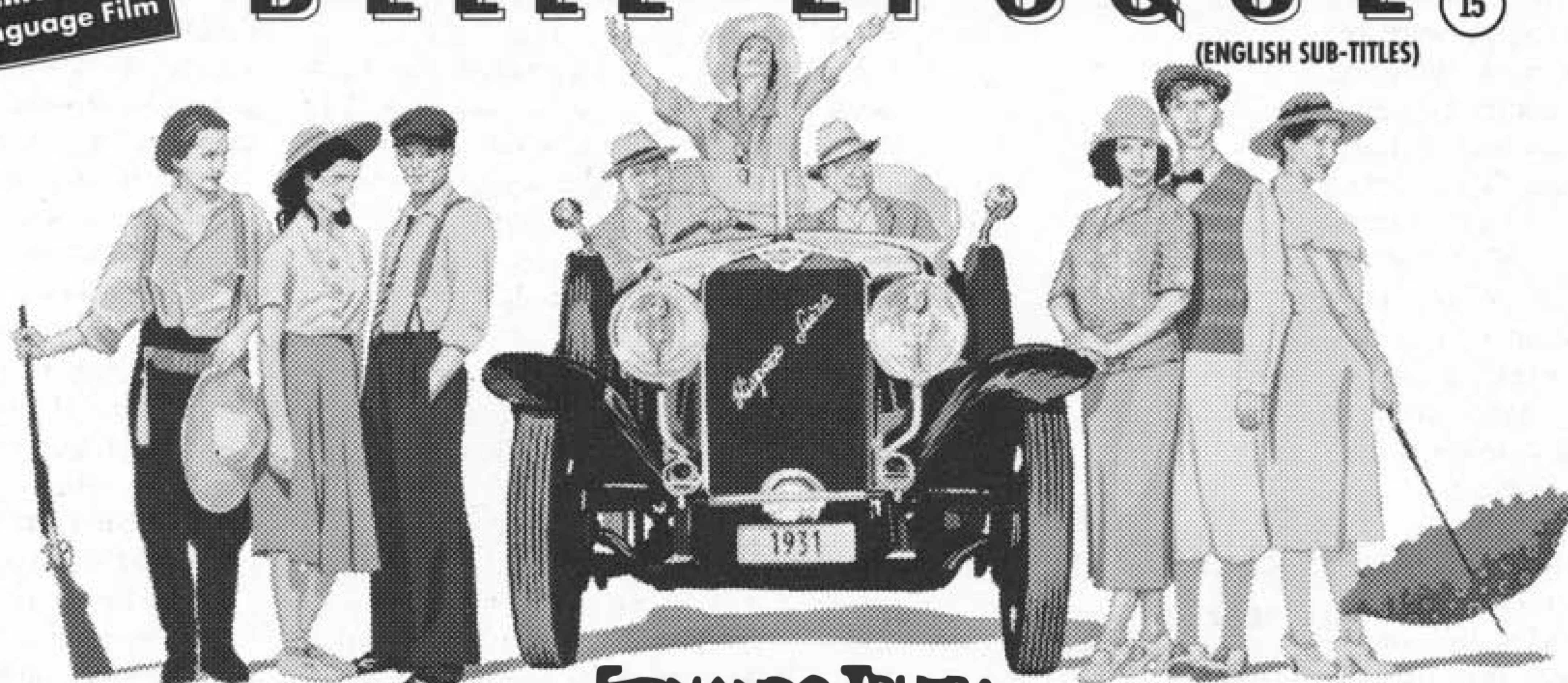
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BELLE EPOQUE

15

(ENGLISH SUB-TITLES)

NOMINATED FOR
AMERICAN ACADEMY AWARD
BEST Foreign Language Film



A film by **FERNANDO TRUEBA**

director of photography JOSÉ LUIS ALCÁINE music ANTOINE DUHAMEL editing CARMEN FRÍAS art director JUAN BOTELLA sound GEORGES PRAT wardrobe LALA HUETE production director CRISTINA HUETE

screenplay RAFAEL AZCONA on a story by RAFAEL AZCONA, JOSÉ LUIS GARCÍA SÁNCHEZ and FERNANDO TRUEBA executive producer ANDRÉS VICENTE GÓMEZ director FERNANDO TRUEBA.

Produced by FERNANDO TRUEBA P.C.S.A. (Madrid) - LOLA FILMS (Barcelona) - ANIMATOGRÁFO (Lisboa) - FRENCH PRODUCTION (Paris) With the collaboration of SOGEPAG. This film has been supported by the fund EURIMAGES Council of the European Union

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In memory of

Derek Jarman

By Christopher Hobbs

1969: My first memory of Derek Jarman is at Bankside, where he was taking a bath in the middle of an empty warehouse floor. Beyond, his studio space was a long-timbered galley with windows overlooking the Thames and St Paul's. His bed was enclosed in a small greenhouse, and was already the talk of Italian design magazines.

There was a party. Young artists, designers, musicians talked, sat, lay about, looking at Derek's works of the moment, huge translucent demilune capes into which he had laminated the detritus of the foreshore. Much later he was to incorporate into his work the detritus of another foreshore, Dungeness.

It was at Bankside that the first films were made; experimental pieces in which, to save film, he undercranked the camera so that when projected at normal speed images of the river rushed by in a sparkling mist and pedestrians on the bridge were speeding emmets. Friends posed in strange hats, or naked in the plastic capes, or lay languidly while Derek explored light with his new toy.

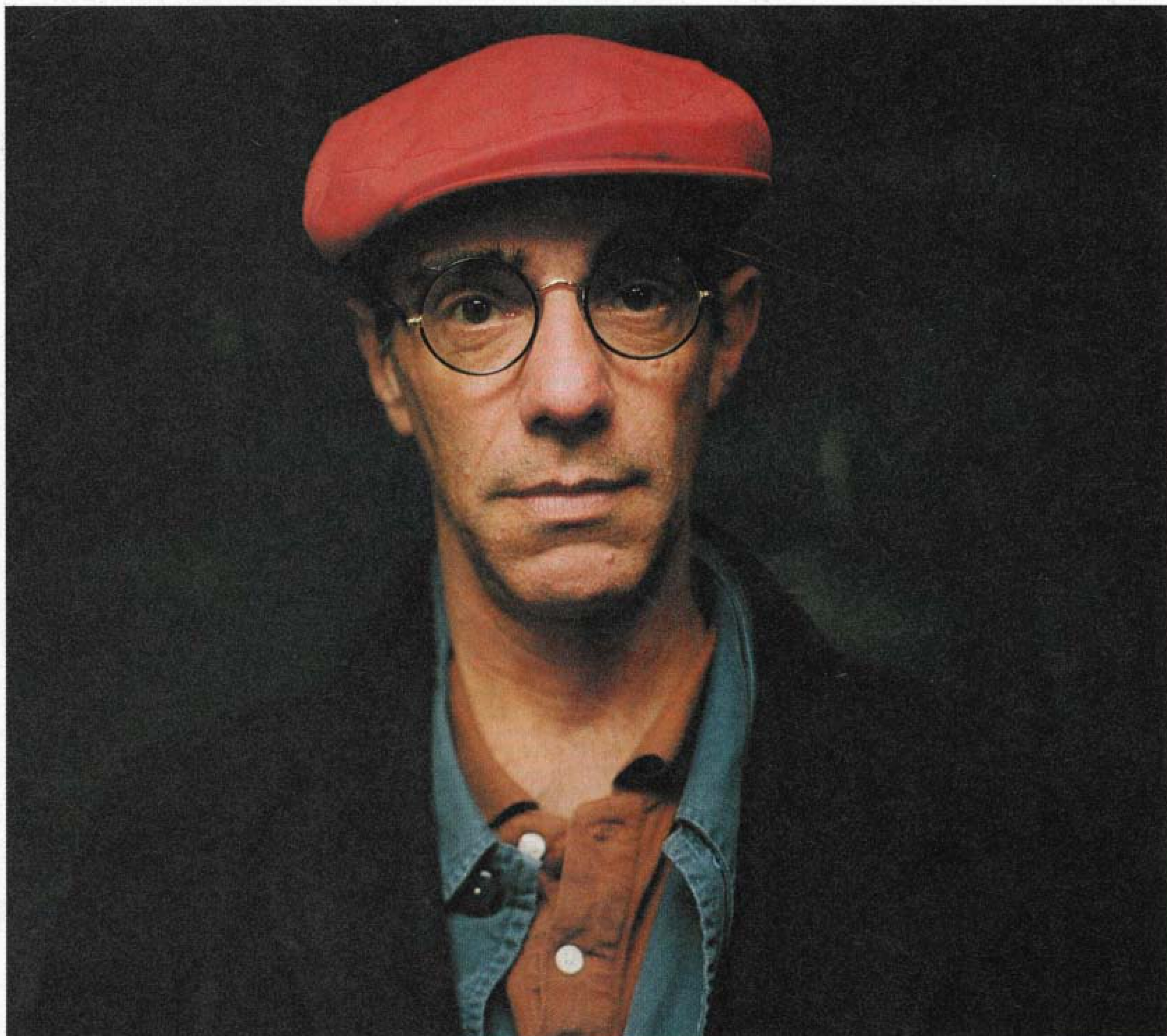
After the studio at Bankside had been flattened by enthusiastic developers and Derek had been evicted from the flat lent to him by Anthony Harewood in Sloane Square, he took a floor on Butler's Wharf. Peter Logan installed himself on the top floor and I took one below him, the whole depth of a riverside warehouse for £10 a week. Now only millionaires can afford it.

I had already helped as sculptor on *The Devils*, wonderfully designed by Derek for Ken Russell, and on *Savage Messiah* I sculpted all of Gaudier's pieces in stone. Derek and I spent a day and a night chiselling in relays a neo-classical torso from the oldest, hardest piece of marble ever to have left a monumental mason's yard.

When Derek, using a camera borrowed from Graham Dowey, began filming in earnest, I helped by creating or scrounging the dressing for him. His crew were his actors, so that in those early flickering images many of his collaborators appear as ghosts and angels, dancers and demons. Kevin Whitney and Graham flash mirrors into the lens, Luciana Martinez vamps. James Whaley, producer of *Sebastiane*, stands naked but for a huge plaster mask, Gerald Incandela, his head in a paper bag, flutters in the heat from a leaping bonfire and Jordan, queen of punk, dances eerily in full tutu around flames that will echo and re-echo throughout Jarman's films.

The party went on.

The first scene of *Sebastiane*, and the last shot, was to be Diocletian's birthday. There was little enough money after the Sardinian locations, so we swept into Andrew Logan's top floor, where he had moved in opposite his brother, and transformed it into a Roman palace. Ian Cairnie painted Pompeian murals, glittering ornaments were borrowed or faked, and the floor was painted as pink marble. Costumes came with the actors. We all mouthed our lines, many using cribs; only Jordan delivered her



HOWARD SCOLEY

Perpetual motion: Derek Jarman photographed during the filming of 'Wittgenstein'

long speech in faultless South London Latin and Lindsay Kemp did his phallic dance. Outside, it poured with rain.

The distinguished artist Robert Medley, who was Diocletian, commemorated the scene in a vast painting. I made a golden cuirass for Leo Treviglio, who played Sebastian, and the first of many gold wreaths. I laid the last of them on Derek's coffin at Prospect Cottage.

Butler's Wharf, where so much had been accomplished, came to an end in a fiery holocaust started in one of the lower floors. I saw the space one night a year later when making a pop promo for Bonnie Tyler. While the crew manoeuvred a huge flying saucer where we used to film in the sun, I walked up the blackened stone stairs and found to my astonishment that Derek's floor was perfectly preserved; the furniture, the bed, even the desk with everything on it, frozen in charcoal.

Wherever Derek lived he created a vortex of creativity, drawing the young and talented into a world where anything was possible and "No" was not an option. Andy Marshall's violence was channelled into furniture-making, and his work is in the finest homes of Europe. Lee Drysdale, a star-struck Eastend kid who helped me paint the floors in *Jubilee*, has directed his own script in Hollywood. When Nicholas Ward-Jackson's project of *Caravaggio* was made after seven years of struggle, I felt able to execute all the necessary paintings while working with

Derek to evoke the atmosphere of a timeless Rome. Even now I hardly know how it was done, except that nothing seemed impossible, and that although Derek himself is gone, he has left that awareness with all of us who worked with him.

Even in the last years when the fatal illness had taken hold and he became more and more dependent on his friend Keith Collins, the party continued. Far from narrowing, Derek's life seemed to flow outwards, covering his continued film work, writing, painting, and perhaps most strongly his championship of the gay cause.

There was a day at Prospect Cottage, bright and windy, when I watched the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence confer gay sainthood on Derek. He sat rather sheepish on a wooden throne in the golden robe from *Edward II* while a flock of masculine nuns leapt and sang his praises and the gathered press snapped and flashed. Behind, the little black cottage sat in its stone garden under a blue sky.

Although increasingly his life became public property, the flood of creativity never ceased, rushing on past *Blue* to the final *Glitterbug*, which returns to those old, ghostly images so personal to Derek and to all those who were fortunate enough to enter his magic circle.

Christopher Hobbs collaborated with Derek Jarman on many projects including 'Jubilee' and 'Edward II'. A full appreciation of Derek Jarman will be published later this year

'I walked up the blackened stone stairs and found to my astonishment that Derek's floor was perfectly preserved; the furniture, the bed, the desk frozen in charcoal'

'STILL THE SAME AS THEY WERE BEFORE THEY WERE'

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK TILLIE



The boys in the band: posing and poised, above, and at work, opposite

'Backbeat' rides the wave of a Beatles revival. How does this film imagine their early days? And why is Astrid Kirchherr, the film's femme fatale, so haunting and fascinating?
By B. Ruby Rich

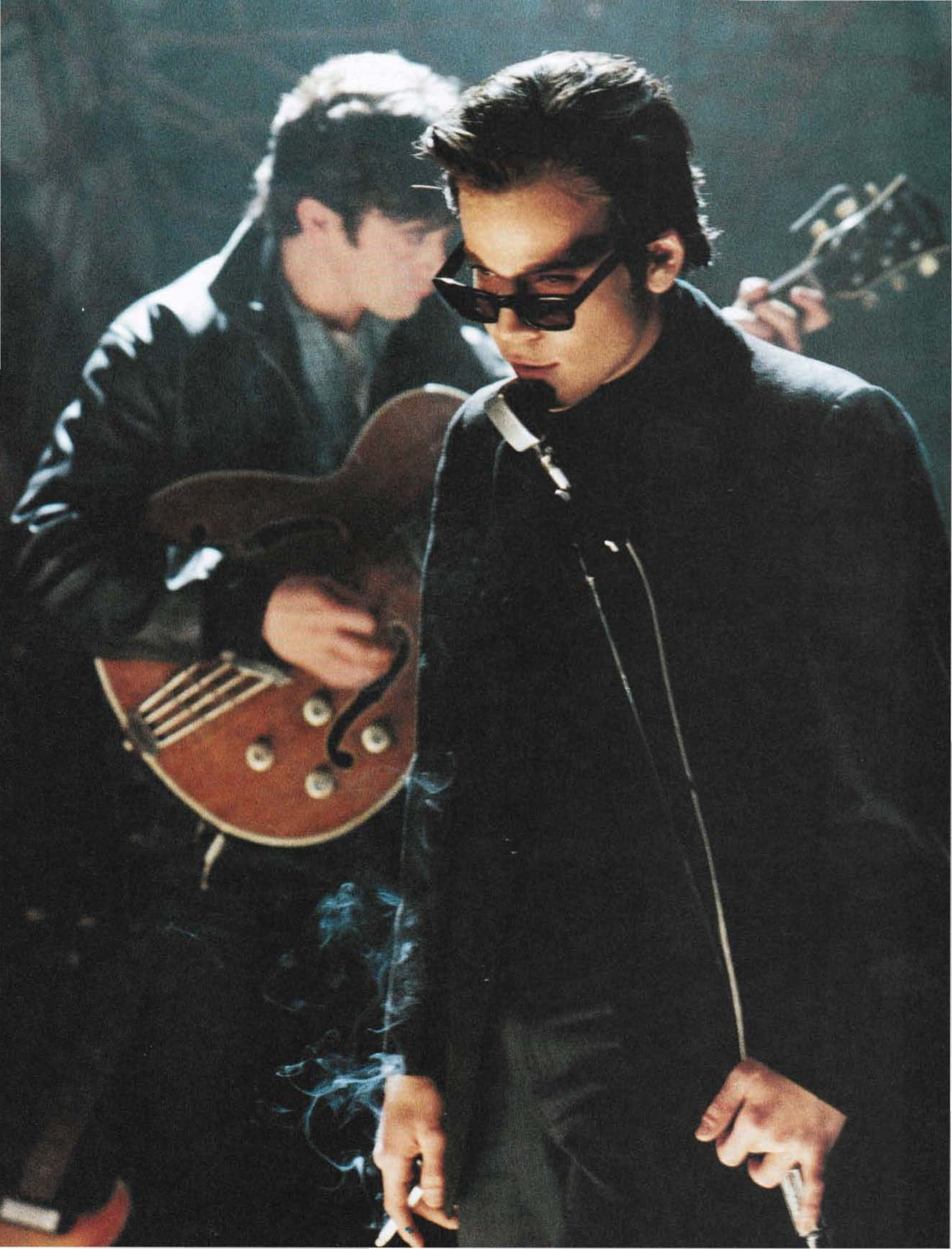
There's a serious Beatles revival afoot. This winter the US press was full of commemorative articles noting the 30th anniversary of the lads' appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, while the music press revved up a couple of decibels over news of impending CD releases and rumours of a dream reunion of the trio of survivors in a recording studio. More surprising, perhaps, are signs that the Beatles are becoming their own independent film genre, set in an imaginary neighbourhood of the past that everyone is dying to visit. In 1992 Christopher Munch had a significant success with *The Hours and Times*, a debut film that imagined the weekend that John Lennon and Brian Epstein might have spent in Barcelona on the eve of the group's breakthrough. And Allison (Gas Food Lodging) Anders recently disclosed her next project: the screenplay concerns an imaginary relationship between a girl (the adolescent Allison, in fact) and Paul McCartney.

This spring, *Backbeat* comes to the screen. It's the most normative of the Beatles projects; whereas the other two are revisionist in impulse, bringing us points of view (gay desire, female desire) that were never presented at the time, *Backbeat* is more simply and unapologetically reconstructive. It is nostalgic rather than imaginary, resting solidly on memories imported from the past. In so doing, it leads the audience by the hand back to the poignant days of 1960.

For me and my middle-aged generation, it registers a convincing return to a decisive cultural moment – before the Berlin Wall, JFK's assassination, the swinging sixties, feminism – but just before, of course, as cracks were already appearing in the old world order, cracks that *Backbeat* works to widen. Cracks in the post-war hegemony? This film, modest bit of rock retro that it is, sketches themes of history and myth, past and future, Liverpool and Hamburg, prising them open and letting them fall victim to its central theme of young love (acknowledged, unacknowledged, requited, unrequited). In the process, we get glimmers of the world that's about to arrive, a world of free love and psychedelia and new musical styles.

Granted, *Backbeat* hardly comes from nowhere. The first Scala Productions film out of the gate, produced by Nik (Virgin Records) Powell and Stephen (*The Crying Game*) Woolley with the collaboration of veteran New Zealand producer Finola Dwyer, and directed by music ►

'BACKBEAT' AND THE STORY OF THE BEATLES



◀ video veteran Iain Softley, it is an insiders' knowing product. The screenplay focuses on the first summer of the Beatles' formation, when John Lennon evidently convinced his pal Stuart Sutcliffe to quit art school, use the cash from the first sale of one of his paintings to buy a guitar, and spend the summer in Hamburg as one of the boys in the band. Stuart goes along as a lark, half learns to play bass, the band performs in strip joints and then hip clubs, attracts a following, gets noticed, rocks better and better.... and the rest is history.

Well, not quite. That's the capital-H version of history, not this film's plot. *Backbeat* focuses instead on a much more intimate field of battle: the tug-of-war between Astrid, the *femme fatale* for whom Stuart falls hard, and John, the jealous best friend who loses him to Astrid, to Hamburg, to art – and to an untimely death.

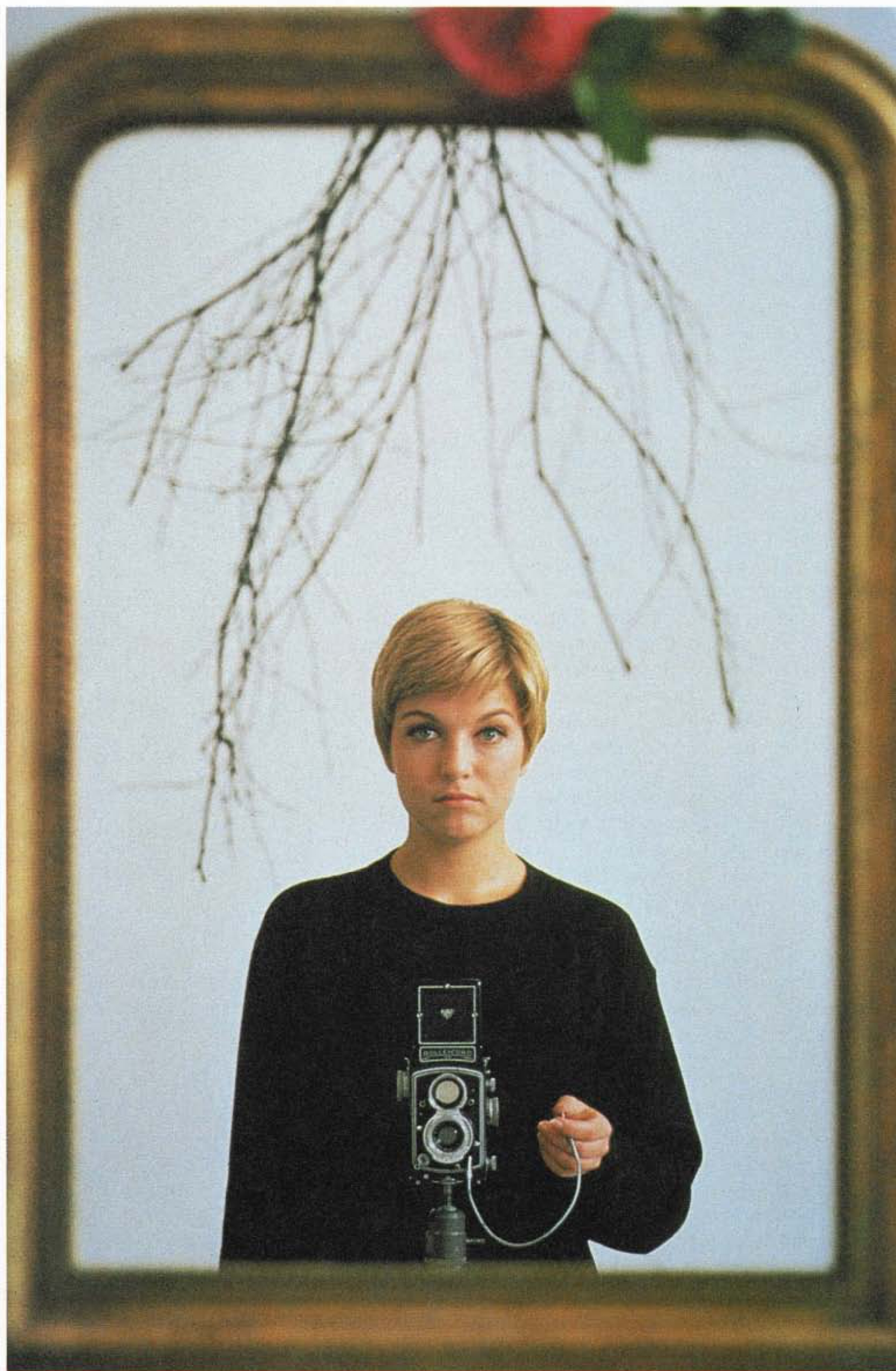
Sad-eyed lady

Like its Christopher Munch predecessor, *Backbeat* is energised by its acting and cinematography. Ian Wilson's palette recalls the time when colour was brand new, fades it to match our memories, then moves as fresh and hard-driving as the music on the soundtrack – all cover tunes performed by an all-star band of rockers. The editing is less successful, perhaps inspired overmuch by the jump-cut frenzy of the early Beatles movies. But Softley wisely cast Ian Hart to reprise his role as John Lennon (it's getting hard to imagine his playing anyone else), equal parts ambition and passion mixed with class resentment and homoerotic yearning. Sheryl Lee, the dead diva of *Twin Peaks* fame, is surprisingly good as Astrid Kirchherr, the real-life bohemian photographer who became involved with Sutcliffe (enacted effectively by Stephen Dorff), and whose story of that time, told personally to Softley, inspired the film.

It's lucky that Lee (who was born in Germany even if her life was subsequently American) works out so well, for Astrid's centrality turns the quintessential 'guys' story into a 'chick movie' by its end. For me, once the boys-with-guitars scenario has been laid out and the we're-gonna-make-it-someday plot set in wind-up motion, the heart of the film is Stuart Sutcliffe's fascination with Astrid Kirchherr.

"Sad-eyed lady of the lowlands." That's a tune of Bob Dylan, not Beatles origin, but it inevitably comes to mind when women of this era float back into view. Astrid belongs to a lost tribe of 60s *femmes fatales*, women who wielded power based on an ineffable sense of mystery and sexual appeal. They may have been aloof and unknowable, but their eyes and smiles seemed to promise the world. Men went nuts for them and such women rarely had women friends, though they weren't betrayers of women either.

I'm trying to describe a specific type of bygone siren, a woman who could be known only through the medium of sexual exchange (of the heterosexual kind). Their power was not the old-fashioned power of courtesans or wives, though: the old ways were falling, beatniks had changed the rules, drugs were changing the rest, and these women were already embodying, knowingly and self-consciously, the New



Flash forward: Sheryl Lee as Astrid Kirchherr, the femme fatale who gave the Beatles their hairstyles

Woman. They were bohemian to the core, willing to cross all the lines and break the rules, able to drink and hold their own with the guys, then bed them later.

They existed for a short period of history barely a decade really, drawing their meaning and strength from the opening up of the repressive 50s and the de-domestication of women. They got drunk on the first draughts of sexual liberation, embracing 'chick' power and then mutating or falling by the wayside when something called women's liberation came along. I remember these women well (the American version, at least) because they fascinated me. They still do, but there's none like them any more. No one like Jan, who hopped on the back of Paul's motorcycle on a Manhat-

tan corner and went home with him for two years, driving her own Ducatti 350 to work as a messenger. Or Florrie, who could sit for hours beguiling you with stories (your own, charmed out of you, since she never divulged hers) and who helped us to organise our first film society in Woods Hole, Massachusetts. Women who claimed a past and a secret and could spin a full-scale myth to suit a listener's desire.

I had forgotten about these women until *Backbeat* came on to the screen and its flashback powers grabbed me so I floated out of my contemporary specificity into a *déjà vu* of past lives. Astrid first appears in a scene in which the band is playing at a Hamburg dive, one where the boys share the stage with the club's stripers and the editing makes like time-lapse pho-

tography to alternate sex display with rock 'n' roll, literalising these overlapping zones of interest, unnecessarily given what we know of their intersections today. The context is important: sexuality as liberation was a brand-new concept, strip clubs were cutting-edge, and the notion of seeing brand-new music there was part of the thrill (*frisson*, if you insist) and the currency. It was all, in short, modern.

From Astrid to Yoko

Astrid, importantly, is not a stripper, nor a groupie, nor a girl fan gaga in the aisles. Taken to the club by her boyfriend Klaus, who has already made the band's acquaintance and judged them worthy of his haute-European attention, Astrid arrives as an equal: a photographer (*ergo* an artist), a nonconformist, a fellow-rebel against the established archaic systems and – trump card – wealthy. The lads have ambitions and aspirations, but these are all in the future, cheques drawn against funds not yet in the bank; Astrid already has certainty, already exists, no patent pending. John Lennon is instantly and reasonably threatened by Stuart's attraction to her, anticipating his defection into her arms. His jealousy seems equally divided between the two: he wants him, he wants her, he wants to be part of what they mean to each other, he wants what they have. Instead, he gets the Beatles. Stuart refuses to agree with Astrid's worries that he got a bad deal, sure he got the best of it.

Put this way, Sutcliffe's defection just before fame from the male kingdom of rock 'n' roll to the female realm of sexuality and artistic creation looks in hindsight like an eerie blueprint of the path Lennon would himself take after fame, when he abdicated his Beatles throne to unite with Yoko Ono. His Astrid? With this pre-history filled in, it certainly seems that Lennon may indeed have been recapturing the lost Eden that Stuart and Astrid represented to him.

Such speculation, of course, plays no part in *Backbeat*'s narrative. Like *La Bamba* or *Coal Miner's Daughter* or other such straightforward music histories, it wants its cake of nostalgia frosted over with the icing of tragedy; it wants to shed a tear as it taps its toe, sighing over lost innocence, sneakily inhabiting past and present at one and the same time. What makes this film work so well and move the audience so evocatively into its own set of real or imagined memories is that Softley never mines the emotional terrain of his characters to extract symbolic meaning. They are not us, we are not them.

For a moment, though, we can imagine otherwise – we can play in a Europe not yet bereft of its dreams, in a cultural landscape where experiment is not yet tarnished by career aspirations, in a time when sex was something both more and less than itself, just barely transcendent but not yet dangerous. When the history of the 60s is written through its films, perhaps this oddly accurate retrospection will end up carrying more weight than the more authentic artefacts (*The Knack*, *Darling*, *Blow-Up*), which, after all, by definition could not take into account what was going to happen next. *'Backbeat' opens on 1 April and is reviewed on page 35 of this issue*

Jon Savage on art, pop and a new world

Pop art



A world away: Klaus, Astrid and Stuart

There is an old photograph taken at the Hamburg Art Carnival of three teenage artists: Klaus Voormann, Astrid Kirchherr, Stuart Sutcliffe. As it happens they are a romantic triangle, but you'd never know it from their gang-like similarity, their defiantly androgynous collusion against the world.

They look magnificent. Astrid dominates, wearing a low-slung black T-shirt and a black leather suit. Both men have the swept-forward, bouffant *pilzenkopf* (mushroom head) haircuts that the Beatles later adopted; Voormann is in a velvet tunic with lace cuffs and ruff, Sutcliffe sports black leather trousers, pointed winkle-picker shoes and a shirt tied high around his midriff. Carnations adorn his shirt and trousers, through which rises a huge hard-on.

It is 1961: a world away from ours. Popular music was pure show business; the Beatles were unknown outside a few people in Liverpool and Hamburg; the elements which fuel today's pop culture – weird clothes, sexual nonconformism, drug delirium, emotional intensity – were so far underground as to be invisible to mainstream society. The photograph freezes the three at that point where our world becomes visible, because they helped to create it.

1961 is also a year elided from most youth culture histories, and it is this forgotten moment which Iain Softley's *Backbeat* seeks to excavate. On one level, the film is a rite-of-passage teen movie – boys bond together, meet girls, go through changes, pass into death/adulthood/stardom – but its meat is the life of Stuart Sutcliffe, the fifth Beatle who died just eight months before the group's first UK hit, the brilliant painter who symbolises that

moment when the British finally put their own spin on American pop culture.

Sutcliffe was born on 23 June 1940 – the first full year of the Second World War – to a Scottish family living in Liverpool. His younger sister Pauline, an American-trained psychotherapist, speaks of a family that, unlike many others, held together during the war: "Unlike many boys of his age, he had the full-time presence of his father until he was seven – developmentally through the most critical years." Entering Liverpool Art College in autumn 1956, Stuart quickly showed a confidence beyond his years. Art school has long been the place where weird kids go to hang out, but Sutcliffe was serious about his painting. His early canvases were figurative, but encouraged by teacher Arthur Ballard he went further – into Abstract Expressionism. Fired by the example of painters such as Modigliani and De Stael, whose brief, intense lives reflected their work, he started to burn up for his art.

By 1959, Sutcliffe was a powerful presence in Hope Street – well known for his productivity as a painter and for his sartorial individuality. According to flatmate Rod Murray, "everybody tried to look like Jean-Paul Sartre. If you had a black poloneck, a black beret and a small beard, you were in. Otherwise you wore an art school scarf, khaki denims – KDs, jumpers and a duffle coat. Most of us wore what was left over from school: nobody had the money to be really fashion-conscious then."

Sutcliffe and Murray shared a first-floor flat in Gambier Terrace, a row of decaying nineteenth-century houses between Liverpool's Anglican cathedral and the city's red light district. With his friend John Lennon, a less committed art student, Sutcliffe started to dress like a Teddy Boy in tight jeans, pointed winkle-pickers and with a swept-back, quiffed hairstyle. "Stuart liked to look moody and deep like James Dean," says Murray. "Then he'd turn round and grin at you: 'Do I look all right?'"

Lennon and Sutcliffe were pop fans, a rarity at the time. Although Elvis Presley had had a huge impact in the UK in 1956, pop music was seen as a transient, working-class fad. The mainstream student musical taste was for traditional jazz: a hearty English revival of New Orleans Dixieland, historically important but unlistenable to now. Sutcliffe painted to the Everly Brothers and Buddy Holly, while Lennon had his own group that he had formed with fellow Southsiders Paul McCartney and George Harrison. This was something new.

Eduardo Paolozzi and Eddie Cochran

When rock 'n' roll first came to the UK in 1955, it was so strange and powerful it might as well have come from outer space. For British teenagers, who had grown up with rationing until 1954, America was the future: a science-fiction land of tailfins, supermarkets, sun-kist bodies and bizarre crimes. Within the greyness of austerity, these Technicolor fantasies were a beacon to artists such as Paolozzi, who with collages like *I Was a Rich Man's Plaything* (1947) laid out the imaginative parameters of Pop Art.

What Paolozzi did was to rip up American magazines and put them together in mon- ▶



Reel performance: Ian Hart as John Lennon, on his way to fame

◀ tages that juxtaposed sex, death and consumerism: the great equation of the century's second half. Although these ideas gained wider exposure through the Independent Group – with whom Paolozzi contributed to the 1956 exhibition 'This Is Tomorrow' – they were not in art school currency: as Rod Murray says, "London was a long way off from Liverpool."

A generation younger than the Independent Group, Sutcliffe and Lennon didn't have to come to terms with pop, they bathed in it – and indeed the proletarian elements of the Ted style provided a suitable metaphor for their middle-class rebellion. The problem was how to do it for themselves. The bridge was provided by that now-forgotten fad skiffle, which after Lonnie Donnegan's massive 1956 hit 'Rock Island Line' reduced American folk-blues into a racket that anybody could play as long as you had a guitar, a washboard, a stand-up bass and an attitude. Like punk 20 years later, skiffle's do-it-yourself ethic offered access to production. It is where British pop begins.

1960 is the year when everything comes into focus. In January Stuart sells a painting in a student exhibition for £65. Encouraged by Lennon, he spends the money on a Hofner President bass guitar – a radical move for the time, as Pauline Sutcliffe explains: "Very few people had then the electronic equipment we have now. A guitar then was an exotic object of a different kind of desire." Stuart then joins Lennon's group, renamed the Silver Beatles. He takes the *nom de guitare* Stuart De Stael.

In March Stuart and John go to see leather-clad Gene Vincent and Eddie Cochran in one of the first hard-core American rock 'n' roll package tours of the UK – according to Nik Cohn, "the starting point from which British pop really began to get better"; a few days after the tour Cochran is killed in a car accident. On 24 July, along with his Gambier Terrace flatmates, Sutcliffe is pictured in a sleazy tabloid exposé – "THIS IS THE BEATNIK HORROR: this bizarre new cult imported from America is a dangerous menace to our young people" – the first public documentation. A few weeks later the Beatles drop the Silver and head for Hamburg.

This is where *Backbeat* kicks in, with the

chance meeting between British rockers and German existentialists. As Astrid Kirchherr explains: "It was so soon after the war. All the struggles we had then: the guilt of the war, the guilt of our parents. Then meeting some youngsters from England who felt: the Germans are our enemies. They came to play music, and suddenly they found Germans were creative people that they could be inspired by – and we felt the same. When these two parties came together the feeling was indescribable."

"Before we met the Beatles, we used to go to little bars and hear jazz. There were about three or four gay bars in Hamburg: I used to go to them, they had a nice atmosphere. All our influences were from France: literature, paintings, artists. The Beatles' influence was more from the States: that's what was so exciting about our relationship. We could pass our experiences on to each other."

Goodbye to all that

Backbeat hones in on two triangles as a way of charting how the Beatles sloughed off their British puritanism. As Astrid now says, "In Germany, our parents gave us the freedom to show our feelings. Klaus had been my boyfriend. When Stuart became my boyfriend he didn't feel right in Klaus' company but after Klaus told him how happy he was that I was happy, they became very close friends. The guilt was taken away from Stuart." The other triangle, between John, Stuart and Astrid, spills over into violence when Stuart wants to leave the group: as the two young men pound each other, their punches dissolve into hugs. "John and Stuart had a hard time," says Astrid. "They needed and loved one another, but though there was nothing homosexual about it, Stuart had a hard time expressing his feelings to John and vice versa. I told him it was not a problem: you can tell someone you love them."

The most obvious symbol of this emotional breakthrough came in 1961, when the Beatles swapped their macho, stiff quiffs for the androgynous, brushed-forward cut inspired by Astrid and Klaus. "Think of a Greek statue, think of Michelangelo's *David*: picture this hairstyle," she says. "Jean Cocteau put it in *La Belle et*

la bête; Jean Marais had this hairstyle but shorter. All the art students had this style too, but wanting to be different, we made it longer. Without grease, it was very poetic."

As the film climaxes, the Beatles are on the brink of a success, the magnitude of which no one could grasp. Their screaming fans are cut against Stuart's own frenzy: having left the group, he is studying under Paolozzi at Hamburg's state school of art. His paintings are becoming more sculptural, more violent – twisted heads, fuzzy with pain, or grid-like abstracts in primary red and black. Looking at them 30 years later, you can see infinity.

Stuart Sutcliffe died on 10 April 1962 from a brain haemorrhage, cause unknown. At the film's end, Stuart's spirit enters John as he stands with Astrid in her studio: "John became something else after Stuart's death," she says. "To most people he was still the hard Lennon, but to those of us who knew him, he allowed his heart to become gentle. He became a man."

Hamburg gave the Beatles the emotional intensity to match the black music they loved. By April 1963 they were an English sensation: two smash hits written by the group themselves was an unheard-of feat in an industry that still copied America. A year later they occupied the top five places in the US singles charts as the spearhead of what is now called "the English invasion" of America. A bewildered media focused on their hairstyles as a symbol of this phenomenon.

As the Beatles relaxed into their success from 1965 on they refused the example of rock stars such as Elvis Presley who had become all-round entertainers. And the more successful the Beatles were, the weirder they became. They took drugs and sang lyrics of an unprecedented emotional intensity: you can hear echoes of Stuart in Lennon's 'You've Got to Hide Your Love Away', 'Norwegian Wood' and 'Help'. In 1967 Lennon acknowledged his debt by immortalising Sutcliffe on the Peter Blake cover for Sgt. *Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*: high Pop Art for the mass market.

Backbeat roots this extraordinary story not just in the emotions you would expect, but in a time and place: Liverpool and Hamburg, 1960 and 1961. This closer look at the Beatles' story places them not as an accident or a *deus ex machina*, but as harbingers of a major tectonic shift in British society: increased access to higher education, better health thanks to the Welfare State, the opportunity for foreign travel – a real democratisation, predicated partly on consumerism, that has since been reneged upon. It also illuminates the 60s shift that was both surprising and all-encompassing: during that decade what had formerly been the preserve of outcasts – tiny minorities on the edge of the known world – became the motor of the western consumer machine.

The Beatles and their German friends took a journey into the unknown that had effects that still resonate today: it is *Backbeat's* achievement, within the disciplines of a commercial film, to capture what this felt like. As Astrid Kirchherr now says, "It was such a wonderful time: we put our knowledge into a big pot and just drank from it."

Ben Thompson pins down the Beatles on celluloid

Fade into colour

● Anyone born after the release of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* has now lived for more than half their life in a world without John Lennon. I'm not quite sure what this means, but if – as seems likely – the Beatles were a shopping trolley from Venus falling with a mighty splash into Britain's stagnant cultural canal, then the ripples are becoming progressively harder to discern.

Building up a memory of something not actually heard or seen is a random, complex business, in which facts can confuse the issue as much, if not more, than fictions. There's Paul McCartney on tour, playing a load of Beatles songs that the band themselves never played live. Or Channel 4's 'repeats' of *Ready Steady Go!*, which are not original shows but edited packages put together by Dave Clark (who bought up the rights) with an understandably wary eye on the Dave Clark Five's place in history. Even discs can be deceiving. The brouhaha that surrounded the recent CD release of the Beatles' red and blue compilations – sprawling, after-the-fact anthologies with no care for the band's actual history – was a classic example of a debased cultural event.

The colour coding was significant, though. For those whose memories are all in colour, the Beatles are the bridge back to a black and white world. Their *Magical Mystery Tour* film formalised this, being first shown in black and white on BBC1 on Boxing Day 1967 and then given a colour repeat on BBC2 a few days later. So when *Backbeat* opens with the stock narrative device of a black and white historical montage (the Matthews final, dockyards with people working in them) fading into colour, there is something pleasing about it.

The biggest challenge facing the makers of *Backbeat* was to create a world on which the Beatles had yet to make their mark. The burden of hindsight has weighed down many a biopic with disingenuous dialogue, and this one is no exception – the young John Lennon and his arty best friend Stuart Sutcliffe look out across an anonymous Scouse cityscape and proclaim "Liverpool, home of... Liverpoolians"; later John observes prophetically "We're going to be too big for our own good." But there is something in the relationship between Lennon and Sutcliffe in *Backbeat* that is new and strange to us. It's the idea of someone being too cool to be in the Beatles rather than (sorry Mr Best) not cool enough. John's insecurity and aggression in the face of the continental sophistication



Speeding up: the Beatles in the Richard Lester film 'A Hard Day's Night'

which his friend both metaphorically and (in the person of Astrid) literally embraces suggest a sense of cultural inferiority shared by even the sharpest of pre-Beatles British youth.

It is interesting that the other major Beatles picture of recent years, Christopher Münch's *The Hours and Times*, should have a similar theme. Both are set just before the Beatles went supernova. Both describe the young John's journey to cultural sophistication through a close male friendship whose clear homoerotic overtones are of as much interest to him as they are to everyone else.

Whether this says more about Lennon's concerns or those of his cinematic biographers is a moot point. But the divide between art and commerce which the Beatles blurred so beautifully opens up here again. The claustrophobic no-budget chamber piece *The Hours and Times* was focused rigorously on the art house, while the snazzy rough and tumble of *Backbeat* is determinedly populist film-making. The latter's title, though taken from Chuck Berry's 'Rock 'n' Roll' ("It's got a backbeat you can't lose it"), makes it sound like straight-to-video fodder. And in the film's early Hamburg scenes it looks like that too: too many strippers, too much cartoonish lubricity. That *Backbeat* picks up deeper resonance as it goes along is thanks not to sleazy Sweeney-style Brit-grit, but to sympathetic Americanisation.

Stephen Dorff (last seen in the astonishingly crass apartheid redemption boxing movie *The Power of One*) brings quality to the role of Stuart Sutcliffe that is not in the script. To those whose appreciation of Merseyside charm has been dulled by generations of television Scousers, his gentle transatlantic Liverpoolian is much more appealing than the real thing. In *Backbeat*'s most vital department, its music, an American twist is even more beneficial. The music you hear is not the Beatles' early grapplings with rock 'n' roll – which tend to sound pretty dreadful

to today's ears – but an approximation of their spirit by a stellar scratch band of US rock luminaries, featuring members of Nirvana, REM, Sonic Youth, Soul Asylum, Gumball and The Afghan Whigs, that is a triumphant artistic success. How better to reproduce a fervent British take on American music than by getting a load of fervent Americans to do it?

There is a satisfying echo here of the Beatles' original cinematic incarnation. Just as it took British white kids to understand why it was a good thing to copy black American rhythm and blues, so it took an American to create a fresh film language to help to sell it back to the US. Richard Lester was an American TV director who came to Britain in the 50s. Here he worked with Spike Milligan and Peter Sellers – whose influence on the Beatles' zany repartee probably cannot be overestimated – and made *It's Trad, Dad!*, a brave stab at that most ill-fated of genres, the trad-jazz exploitation film.

Three decades on, *A Hard Day's Night* – the Beatles' and Lester's first collaboration – stands up well. The extent to which the film was a step forward from the standard UK pop star vehicle, as driven by Tommy Steele or Cliff Richard, was fully appreciated at the time. It got almost unanimously favourable reviews, with even the *Daily Telegraph* reporting "much to



Christopher Münch's 'The Hours and Times'

enjoy in *A Hard Day's Night*". The feeling you might expect, of a cultural conflict between new and old, is only really glimpsed in Alexander Walker's location reports. If that reporter is to be believed, when the train on which the Beatles were being filmed pulled into Minehead, the crowds of waiting teenage girls were charged by schoolboys holding banners proclaiming "Vivat Brahms".

Watching it now – with its modest supporting turns from John Junkin, Deryck Guyler, Victor Spinetti and a monumentally irritating Wilfrid Brambell – the film has the deceptively gentle air of an Ealing comedy. But as often with Ealing, there are some sharp moments. An irritated commuter tells the flighty foursome: "I fought the war for your sort." Lennon, who has come a long way from his rather Blimpish *Backbeat* persona, replies: "I bet you're sorry you won." There is some pretty tough satire too, of growing media interest in the affairs of youth. George Harrison has harsh words for Susan Campy, the professional trendsetter whom he calls "that posh bird who gets everything wrong."

Parts of the Beatles' dialogue in *A Hard Day's Night* were improvised, but most of it was scripted for them by the young Liverpoolian playwright Alun Owen (who got an Oscar nomination for his pains), so it is strange in *Backbeat* that the actor playing George Harrison should quote one of the laconic witticisms – "Oh yes, I'd be most prepared for that eventuality" – written for the real George by somebody else. In some ways it's apt, hinting at the mixture of flagrancy and elusiveness that makes the Beatles of this period so intriguing.

The strongest sensation *A Hard Day's Night* creates is of unfettered motion within new enclosures, the Beatles' jerky, speeded-up movements recalling the title of Lester's 1960 short, *The Running Jumping and Standing Still Film*. By the time of *Help!*, their second collaboration with him a year or so later, all sense of enclosure has gone. Perhaps that is why this film was not so universally liked – these people no longer knew their place. The Beatles had really broken out: into denim, colour, Caribbean locations and an absurd *Carry On*-style plot about a sacrificial ring and the murderous oriental cult of a goddess who seems to be called Kylie. The Beatles' subsequent avowal of eastern mysticism adds a certain piquancy to their disrespectful spoofing of it here, but the film's most resonant moment comes – appropriately – right near the beginning.

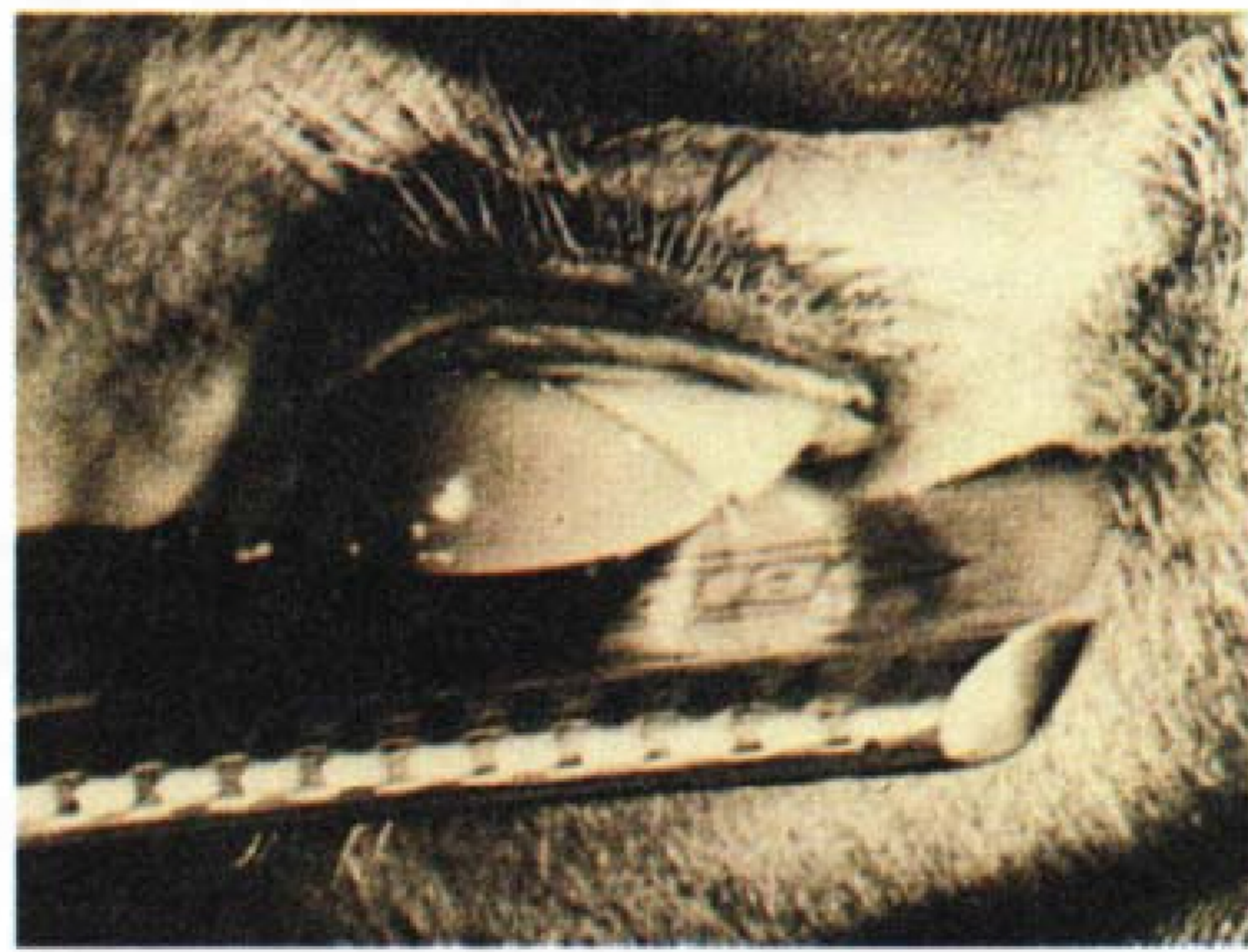
Two old women (one of whom is Gretchen Franklin, *Eastenders*' Ethel) wave them in through their separate terraced doorways to a slyly knocked-through pad of breathtaking opulence. "Lovely lads," observe the gossiping innocents, "so natural... Still the same as they were, before they were."

● “Once upon a time”, we are told, a man sharpens his cut-throat razor. We see his hands purposefully perform the task, his intent face as he tests the blade on his thumb. The man goes to the balcony and watches a cloud move towards the full moon; a woman’s eye is held wide open. The cloud crosses the moon; the razor passes across the eyeball, slitting it open, right there on screen, and liquid oozes out. This opening two minutes of Buñuel’s *Un Chien Andalou* (1928) is one of the most shocking sequences in cinema history. No one struggles, there is no apparent pain or flinching, the act is as dispassionate as it is grotesque. Victim and aggressor seem entirely inappropriate terms of judgment; certainly one person is injured while another wields a razor, but it is perhaps the viewer who occupies the most painful position. What taboos are violated in this spectacle, what tensions are released? What is at stake in showing the obscene act, which ought to be kept to the margins between cuts?

Contrast this classic scene of violent spectacle with a more recent one involving a less vulnerable body part. *Un Chien Andalou* has long been an art-house favourite, and has just been released on video. But at the nastiest (and wittiest) moment in Quentin Tarantino’s *Reservoir Dogs* (which has so far been refused a video certificate by the BBFC), we see nothing but a bare wall, and the muffled screams as knife meets flesh are drowned by Stealer’s Wheel’s 1974 “Dylan-esque pop bubble-gum favourite” ‘Stuck in the Middle with You’. While the sound and sight of Mr Blonde slicing off Nash’s ear are

An eye is sliced on screen. Is this the limit of cinematic violence? And if so, what is special about the violation of this particular organ?

By Linda Ruth Williams



AN EYE FOR AN EYE

central to Tarantino’s movie (making this the film’s most notorious scene), what we actually see and hear is but a cinematic conceit: at the crucial moment the camera looks demurely away, sliding to the left with a wicked humour that does the censoring for us, only to look back once the deed is done. (“Was that as good for you as it was for me?” asks Mr Blonde.) The impression is of breathtaking explicitness, an audacious transgression which combines a singalong soundtrack, on-screen dancing and awesome sadism, demanding that we laugh and be sick at the same time in the time-honoured tradition of full-frontal schlock, yet the violence takes place elsewhere and nowhere. Apart from a few unforgettable examples, this kind of implied violence has often been the cinematic fate of the eye – sliced, gouged and pierced at the edges of the frame or off-screen. What is it about violence to this particular organ that pushes the limits of on-screen spectacle?

At the other end of the century and cultural scale, Buñuel’s scene is replayed by Arnold Schwarzenegger as the Terminator. Having already performed an operation on his injured cybernetic arm, he – almost unwatchably – deals with a battle-damaged eye. The instruments of injury (or surgery) are carefully displayed, the scalpel recalling the razor of *Un Chien Andalou*. In each case, before the blade goes in, a face (Buñuel’s woman and Cameron’s Terminator) is fixed for a second as its left eye is held open by fingers, the face each time occupying roughly the same space at the centre of the frame. Buñuel cuts to the moon cut by clouds before returning to the eye at the point of violence (a strategy which catches us horribly off guard), while Cameron’s camera keeps looking as the scalpel penetrates the exposed eye. We expect one cut and get another: the edit away doesn’t happen and instead we see the knife go in.

Hideous as this would be in long shot or by implication (we could, perhaps, just see the hand picking up the instrument and then those heavy drops of blood in the sink which come later), the problem isn’t simply the close-up which offers us the injured eye centre frame. The key is the *movement*, the *process* of violation which doesn’t end where it ought, doesn’t cut before knife meets eye (the sequence viewed in freeze-frame has nothing of the same impact). Only after witnessing this act of violation do we cut to profile and the removal of the false humanoid cornea. The wound is patted with a dry white towel, and we

From the surreal to the robotic: in both Buñuel’s ‘Un Chien Andalou’, bottom left, and Cameron’s ‘The Terminator’, opposite, we are forced to see on screen the ‘unseeable’

move to an extreme close-up of the vulnerable socket encasing the Terminator’s camera-eye, its ‘pupil’ redder and more responsive than the flesh which surrounds it (it dilates, it swivels). The famous Terminator sunglasses are then donned to create the iconic Raybanned image which is now so familiar that we forget the reason for the shades: to mask the evidence of ocular violence.

Eyes have been subject to a range of cinematic violation which few other body parts have had to endure. They are pecked out or penetrated with pins and splinters (*The Birds*, *Suspiria*, *Zombie Flesh Eaters*, *Opera*), mirror fragments are wedged into them (*Manhunter*), they are sliced by knives (*New York Ripper*, *Un Chien Andalou*), sucked half way out of their sockets (*Total Recall*), forced open with metal brackets (*A Clockwork Orange*), skewered by booby-trapped binoculars (*Horrors of the Black Museum*), even shot at point-blank range as they look through keyholes (*The Dead Eyes of London*, *Opera*). Damage to eyes recurs as a symbol of the worst possible violence, a spectacular last straw in horror far more disturbing even than representations of fatal injuries to vital organs.

Those few moments when the camera not only looks but looks closely and unswervingly have presented a fascinating problem, bound up with the difficult pleasures at the heart of the spectator’s response. Why can we see these actions so graphically when a robotic android is their subject, as in *The Terminator*, or a surreal (and therefore unreal?) heroine, as in *Un Chien Andalou*, when similar representations involving more identifiably ‘real’ humans are marginalised? These are scenes which offer a number of scrambled visual satisfactions: the thrill of being there when something goes ‘too far’, a straightforward indulgence of transgression, the breaking of (here, the eye’s) taboo, as well as the complex pleasures of mixed identification. Given the correspondence between on-screen eyes and the viewing organs of the spectator, are these pleasures primarily masochistic? How does the dispassionate tone of some of these scenes disrupt the sense that the spectacle of violent injury must be resolved into a drama of violator and violated? What is it *not* to flinch, to keep looking, or else to be caught unawares when the camera fails to look away? Any response to screen violence must ►



◀ address the question of identification: in looking, are we the eye that is broken or the hand that wields the knife? There are clearly moments when screen violence is anything but a violation, and our response must take on board the pleasures and consent involved.

Rather than trying to resolve these questions with an all too neat moral response, we would be better to look for a way of describing how the rhetoric of these films shapes our involvement image by image, looking closely at scenes which plot the movement of the spectator's reaction. While the power, poetics and perversion of the gaze are now a staple concern of film theory, the cinematic life – and protracted death – of the organ of vision is less well documented. And while the eye and the (sexualised) gaze are not synonymous, clearly something interesting is taking place on the level of identification when the organ through which the image is seen is spectacularly sacrificed on screen, in view, for our eyes only.

Cameras may be weapons (*Peeping Tom*) or surrogate weapons, as 'in the surveillance equipment deployed by countless cinema psychos, fixing their victims until they are ready for the gun. Overtly murderous gazes abound, not just in Hitchcock but across a range of gothic and exploitation flicks, *film noir*, horror: *Rear Window*, *Eyes of Laura Mars*, *Videodrome*, you name it. That the sights of a gun mark out a target like a camera frames its image has offered rich cinematic and theoretical pickings – as US Defense Secretary W. J. Perry said, "once you can see the target, you can expect to destroy it." This is quoted by Paul Virilio in *War and Cinema*, which focuses on the historical synchronicity of the technology of warfare and that of cinema, "the eye's function being the function of a weapon." But what of the eye's function as the target – the 'bull's eye' of violence?

Newly bereaved relatives are known to be more reluctant to consent to cornea donations than to donations of any other organ – even the heart – and though this must certainly be bound up with a sense that the eye is the prime site of a loved one's identity, it also comes from a peculiar squeamishness which only the eye, and any notion of violent injury to it, can provoke. The eye is the supreme organ of violation not just because of what it does but because of what it is: grotesquely penetrable, soft, liable to cry, bleed, respond with discharge, exquisitely sensitive to light and touch. In the world of schlock horror, the eye is asking for it. But while the camera might dwell long and hard on scenes of decapitation, disembowelment or the surreal ways in which a body can be turned inside out on screen, the eye, in its violable vulnerability, constitutes a limit of what audiences can and cannot tolerate. Is this because violence to the eye is the image most immediately felt as visual violence 'done to' the spectator?

For Georges Bataille (author of that marvelous work of ocular porno-horror *Story of the Eye*, as well as of the 1929 essay 'Eye', written partly in response to Buñuel's film), the repulsion of the violated eye is bound up with its seductiveness, for "extreme seductiveness is probably at the boundary of horror." Certainly the violated eyes in the work of Dario Argento are pro-

The eye is the supreme organ of violation: grotesquely penetrable, soft, liable to cry, bleed, respond with discharge



For our eyes only: Dario Argento's 'Opera'

foundly seductive, and *Opera* (sometimes known as *Terror at the Opera*), described by Argento as an "aria of violence beyond imagination", abounds with them. The most resonant image of the film is that of its heroine Betty as she is forced to witness a series of murders after a row of needles is strapped to her lower lids so that she *must* look if she is to avoid impaling her eyes by blinking. Her eyes bleed a little, but the real violence comes from the fact that she cannot close them. Who is the focus of the violence is not clear: others are being killed, but Betty's violation is primary – she is made to *watch*, on penalty of losing her eyes themselves, which is worse than the deaths taking place before her.

This image is reinforced by the instruments of vision which litter the film: video monitors, opera and magnifying glasses, the sights of a gun, a raven's eye blinking like a camera shutter through the opening credits, irised views through keyholes, even eye drops that magnify and blur the eye's surface. The camera moves through a number of peculiar positions: it looks up from a plug-hole as liquid is poured on it (and us), savours the beauty of instruments of destruction as the killer's box of tricks is opened, and most notoriously follows a bullet in slow motion close-up as it spins through a keyhole to meet Mira's peeping eye.

One of the horrific things about this scene is that it takes so long: from the moment Mira kneels down to keyhole level (again, in Betty's sight) and we see with her through the keyhole that the killer is there with a gun, the vulnerability of her eye is signalled. The keyhole is an opening for the killer, not her, even though she is the one who looks. First we see her seeing in profile, then we cut to the irised image through

the keyhole, only to see a hand turning the gun until the barrel points towards us. In the space of a second we look with her into the eye of the gun, see the white flash of the bullet's release, and watch the oblique side view of it spinning to its destination. We then cut back to Mira in profile, still looking at the point of impact, and for around 11 seconds a slow-motion female death is constructed, first through a profile shot that shows the back of her head coming away, then a long shot, held for seconds, as she collapses in slow motion.

Clearly Argento subscribes to the Poe philosophy that the death of a beautiful woman is the most poetic – and cinematic – of topics, and clearly the deaths of his female characters need to be read with the history of feminist reactions to sexualised screen violence in mind. But as the camera fixes Mira again, lying face-up on the floor with only her bloody eye as evidence of her death, the importance of this scene as a key to the film's ocular obsessions, its role as a central moment of transgressive violence, are apparent. Here Argento not only takes us into the moment of violence as it happens; he also presents the spectacle of that violence in motion in its absurd impossibility.

This is a difficult scene to watch, not least because it is so flagrantly unrealistic. Argento revels in exquisitely contorted violations of the body, a gothic-baroque *mise en scène* forever signalling its own artifice, washed by a supremely unnatural palette and preyed upon by a camera that signals its presence with a restless, prowling motion. The film refuses to serve up the innocently, impotently witnessed scenes of everyday sadism that horror's critics claim and castigate; here the neat scopic division of watcher and watched as violator and victim collapses in a protracted experiment with artifice carried out on both sides of the keyhole.

Argento's is just the most focused example in a whole history of such images. Certainly these scenes are bloody, but graphically gory techniques are hardly synonymous with realism, especially in the context of 'impossible' cinematography and special effects which only make you wonder how they were effected: it is as if a correlation between the extravagance of an image and its unreality is emerging. Neither are the sexual discourses which underpin these scenes a clear index of the gratifications which might be provoked: read the Terminator's mutilation alongside Mira's death, or that of Buñuel's woman alongside the spectacular death of Mira's killer later in *Opera* (his eye is pecked out and then eaten by ravens, in the Japanese version at least, before he is killed not once but twice). It is hard to confront the anxieties of these disparate scenes without alluding to castration anxiety, or even to some vaguer fear of penetrability, but the codes and sexual contexts offer no clear image of this either. These are ideas made flesh, elements of a violent visual theory played out like a mystery play – no less politically problematic for all that, but also no less a fantasy, plotted with a macabre meticulousness which obsessively marks its difference from the real.

'Un Chien Andalou' has recently been released on video by Connoisseur

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JAPPE CLAES, JULIEN SCHOENAERTS and starring KAREL BAETENS as Jelle

Screenplay: FRANÇOIS CHEVALLIER & STIJN CONINX. Screen: HENRI MORELLE & JEAN-PAUL LOUBLIER. Costume Design: YAN TAX. Editing: LUDO TROCH. Music: DIRK BRONSE. Production Design: ALLAN STARNKE.
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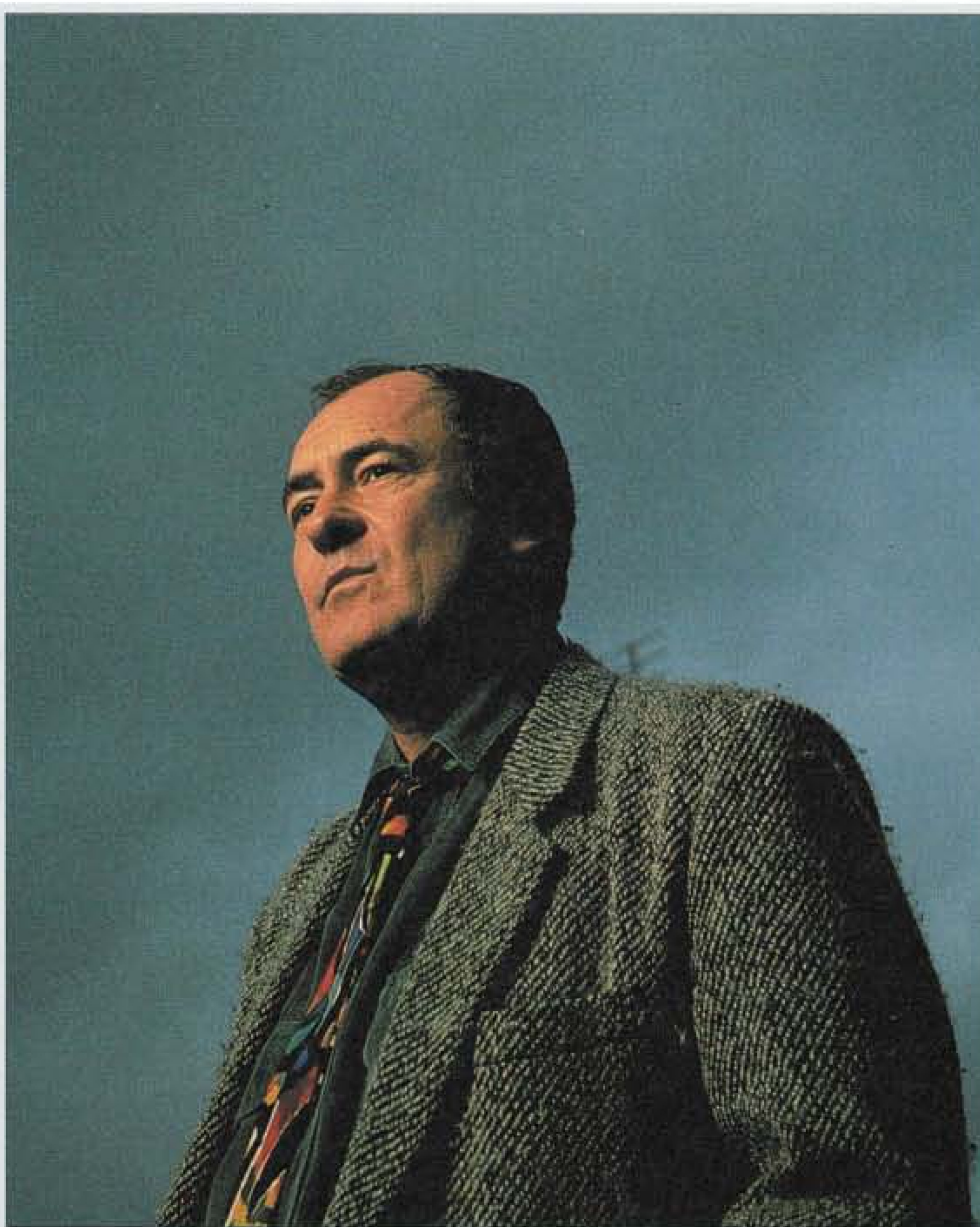
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Bertolucci's 'Little Buddha' makes a very different address to a very different audience from that of his films of the 60s and 70s. His earlier films ('Before the Revolution', 'Partner', 'The Spider's Stratagem' and 'The Conformist') confronted the situation of a Marxist intellectual in contemporary Italy in the form of an Oedipal struggle with a fascist historical past and a bourgeois present, and earned him a position as one of Europe's foremost young art-film directors. With '1900', he attempted to address a wider public by embedding his themes in melodrama. The film was structured as a family saga, projecting a vision of Italian history as something formed by a popular mythology, the socialist peasant culture of Emilia. Problems of distribution partly frustrated him in this aim, but his address to the audience was a more direct and accessible one (in other words, the film was easier to understand and follow) than hitherto. With 'La luna', he came right into the open about his desire to give pleasure to the audience, and exploited psychoanalysis for an even deeper exploration of the genre of melodrama. He then combined this



BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI: INTRAVENOUS CINEMA

With films such as 'The Conformist', Bertolucci established himself as a major figure in European art cinema. Now he makes big-budget spectacles, such as 'Little Buddha', a piece of "oriental kitsch". Why has he made the shift? He explains to Chris Wagstaff

genre with his political study of Italian generational conflicts in 'Tragedy of a Ridiculous Man'.

Bertolucci's cinematic style is characterised by its lyrical employment of long, graceful, sinuous camera movements and a systematically expressive use of colour temperature (warm oranges contrasted with cold blues) together with a narrative style that plays with time, twisting it back on itself to create a perpetual dream-like present for the viewer. All these features, together with the Oedipal melodramatic approach to drama, characterise 'The Last Emperor', where he took the history and culture of recent China as the background for his study of a man deprived of identity by the social and historical forces operating on him – a study similar to that of his earlier films. By now he was working with the British producer Jeremy Thomas, having at his disposal enormous budgets. In our conversation he lamented the way the size of these budgets loaded him with too much responsibility, while confessing that they also reminded him how the nature of cinema is intimately bound up with money, and how money could function as a stimulus to creativity. He pointed out how his artistic career began at the age of 16 with a wind-up 16mm camera, and insisted that "In my hand winding the spring, there was the same tension as there is now that I have big crews and large budgets. My

relationship with the camera remains the same; what has been changed is the structure around. My inner, deep, mysterious motivation has always been a very personal desire to find a language which belonged to me and was not completely inherited from my father."

This "language" informs 'Little Buddha', with its slow, lyrical camera winding through Bhutan, or swirling through Jesse's house in the US, with its conscious manipulation of colour temperature (oranges for Tibet, blues for an economically threatened Seattle), and with its poetical mise en scène used to provoke effects in the memory which the director refers to as "intermittances du coeur or déjà vu". Time is his plaything in this story of Tibetan monks coming to Seattle to find the boy who they are convinced is the reincarnation of their dead master. They give the boy, Jesse, a story book from which he learns the legend of Siddhartha acquiring compassion and becoming the Buddha, and the story he reads is related in flashbacks throughout the narrative of the search for the Tibetan lama's reincarnation.

I asked Bertolucci about the way he filmed the house where the lamas discover the young boy, and he said: "The house where Jesse lives has to be special. It is a house where I know that three solitudes have been united in an Antonioni-like way: the father, the mother and the son. It is an empty house. But the arrival of the lama changes the significance of the emptiness, because when I say 'empty' in a film of Antonioni's, I mean an existential emptiness. When the lama enters, he says approvingly 'very empty' and then he adds 'and very beautiful'. It is a great quality of that idea of a house."

● Around 1970, when people asked you about 'Before the Revolution' and 'The Spider's Stratagem', you said that your goal was to make a film for a wide public like 'Gone with the Wind' rather than films just for the art-cinema audience. That was the area in which you had to compete in cinema. You said: "I could make a film about the wind, and festival audiences would love it", as if to say that this is just a small, converted audience.

That was perhaps the big turning point in my life as a film-maker, the end of the 60s, after I went into a deep depression because of *Partner* and before that *Agonia*, and when I started my analytical therapy. I realised then that all these movies – my movies and my friends' movies, which were sometimes excellent movies – were *inachevés*; they were unfinished because they didn't have the last part of the process, which is the pleasure of the audience. At least half of the masterpieces of cinema are *inachevés*, because they never had an audience to complete them – which doesn't make them less masterpieces than they are. I felt very strongly what I think is my own personal truth: I want desperately to communicate. I don't want to pursue a monologue, I want to have an exchange. I want to switch from monologue to dialogue. But I demand so much from this relationship with the audience, I want it so badly, and am so nervous about it, and afraid that I won't get it, that I prefer to stay in a safe zone, which is the zone where we all were, and where many have remained, a zone, let's say, in the Godard galaxy. I felt I should risk more, and in that period I decided to do so.

My problem is that I can love the movie I saw in Rotterdam last week by Tonino Di Bernardi, an Italian film-maker from Turin who makes movies like in the 60s: black and white, two screens, no sound, live music – fantastic, beautiful, instant experimental ecstasy. I can equally love *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, and the whole machinery of Hollywood. I don't know if this is a fault, but it is possible to love the whole of cinema, with its splendours and its miseries. At a certain point I became aware of this, but I suspect that underneath I was always like this without being able to express it, because in the 60s I would have been considered a traitor. I am talking openly with you about this because I think that this is the moment to clarify my relationship with cinema. I don't want to hold myself up as an example to anybody else, which is why I feel embarrassed when I am asked to give seminars or lectures or to have discussions with students, because I feel I could create confusion in their minds. Young people who want to be cinéastes might be in some way misled by hearing about my love for all aspects of cinema, even the vulgar things. That's why I am a bit cautious.

So you feel they may be made afraid by the notion of not discriminating?

When you are young you need to exercise your faculty of discrimination, because it is in this way that you create your identity. Once you have a solid identity you can stop discriminating and become more generous and open. I remember I used to think I could almost die or kill for a shot of Godard or Mizoguchi.

I think people will find it easy to understand your talk-

ing about a desire to communicate. What they will wonder is: where does the dialogue come from? It is easy to see your side of the communication. But what do you get back?

There are two things. There is an imaginary collective answer, and there is the real, practical collective answer. The imaginary answer is the one I am more interested in. I put it together through pieces of information or crumbs of news I hear, like a letter from somebody, or a friend who calls me from Bolzano saying he was watching *Little Buddha* in a movie theatre when a child stood up behind him and said, "Oh, this is death. I am not afraid of death any more." Or discovering that in Gela, a little town in Sicily where they only go to see films *a luce rossa* [porn films], they went to see *Little Buddha* and it was a big hit. I put together all this information and get a kind of audience response, which in fact is, I think, not only more interesting but at the end of the day more accurate than if I sit in front of an audience that speaks to me, because at that point you have just the few people who have the courage to speak, and they are in general the more narcissistic ones, so they talk about themselves and not about the movie – still interesting, but... It works sometimes. It happened in Pordenone with the audience of a heroic group called Cinema Zero, because they were able to create a good context for film buffs and it was really very interesting. Everybody from grown-ups to children was asking interesting questions and forcing me to give new answers. But that's very rare.

You sound as though you are imagining yourself projecting the film straight into the public's imagination, like putting probes into their brain.

Yes, there is a bit of that. The passivity of the cinema audience in the darkness is total, and a film can have a kind of hypnotic effect and jump all the normal conditions of dialogue, so that it is a bit like speaking with the unconscious. I feel that when I go see a movie it gets straight into my vein – it gets to my vein through my eyes and ears, but it gets to the vein.

Intravenous cinema. What you are describing is your wanting to know what is going on in the imagination of the people who are seeing your film.

What is important is to know that you are getting into the system of the people. After that, it's impossible to know the effects that you have created or provoked, because they are so different. Stop ten people coming out of a movie theatre and ask them all the same question about the film and you will have ten different explanations, even about basic things like the plot. I don't think there exists only one reading of a film. When ten different critics say ten different things, they are all right, because I think a film is the most polymorphous creature.

Do you mind about this unpredictability?

No, "unpredictable" is the highest compliment I can receive. Each one of us takes himself as a metre. For me, I couldn't be happier than when I see a movie that surprises me. Every time I am surprised, I have a little orgasm. One of the reasons why I like *The Piano* is that I have been surprised many times seeing it, by many things. The surprises can come from the plot, from the psychology, and then from the *mise en scène*, and

then because you weren't expecting what you saw, and the surprise opens your brain to different possibilities. Maybe that's why I am so amazed when people are not happy about being surprised. Every time I make a movie they are surprised, because the movie is different from what they were expecting. With *Little Buddha* I found many people who were surprised, not always pleasurably. And this made me think that maybe people like less and less to be surprised in life. In the past, we used to say: "Oh, a great film, so unique and original!" Today I have the feeling that because of a horrible neo-conformism, which has been imposed on us by television and by the fact that the many cultures are becoming one culture, the words "unique" and "original" are becoming insults instead of compliments. And the originality that made the success of a movie is now a danger for it.

Is 'Little Buddha' intended for a young audience?

Oh yes. That's clear from the first words pronounced, "Once upon a time". That is a declaration of war, or of intention, let us say. And the fact that children are among the protagonists, if not the protagonists of the film. And the choice of the *fabula*. The story of Siddhartha is nothing but a fairy tale which a grandfather tells his grandchild. But then I thought: aren't we all children when we watch the story of Buddha in a movie theatre? We know *nothing* about Buddha. So we are in the same position as chil-



'Little Buddha': in search of the innocence of childhood

dren. Also, I thought, aren't we all children when we look at a film in general, quite apart from the story of Siddhartha? My strong desire to find a wavelength on which children can enjoy a film has been part of the problem some people have had in accepting the film as it is, because they find it too simple, simplistic maybe, too elementary. They cannot accept the ideological choice behind the film: of finding a tone of voice accessible to children.

Why? Because, I think, they cannot accept it from me. There is a certain kind of prejudice, in that people expect certain things from me and not other things. Some viewers come out of the film deeply touched – they are moved but they are not sad – while others are scandalised. They don't judge it in terms of what I was trying to do, they refuse it completely, *in toto*. And so there isn't even discussion. What I find strange is that people who refuse the ideological choice of the film, the decisions that lie under the film, are so disoriented or disconcerted that they cannot see that there is another level, the level of the manufacture ►

◀ of cinema in the film, which at least they should be able to get.

Behind the film lay also a very simple idea: I always try to become part of the subject I am talking about. If I shoot a film in China, I have to see Chinese movies, because cinema is my instrument for exploring and gaining knowledge. So if I talk about a period 2,500 years ago, about a young prince, a palace and a small kingdom in northern India, I cannot avoid diving into Indian oleography, Indian popular cinema, Indian kitsch, together with the sublime cinema of Satyajit Ray. But especially what they do now. I can't help thinking Michael Powell was an orientalist, in a way, when he made *Black Narcissus*, or when he made *The Thief of Bagdad*. And I cannot help thinking that kitsch is an essential part of talking today about Siddhartha; it is the resonance of the present in the past, just as we have the resonance of the ideas of Buddha – the ideas of somebody in the past – in the present. It is this exchange that I find so interesting. If cinema is, as we have read 25,000 times, *la mort au travail*, it is also *la vie au travail*, which is the same thing from another point of view. I think one has to be aware of the nature of a movie as something constantly in progress and developing, something created and yet still in progress even when it is in front of the audience, because the audience's reactions change the movie and make it different. It is a much more sensual affair than the major companies think, in Hollywood, where they believe movies are like cars. Cinema is much more dynamic in its nature, and a film is never as finished as some critics think.

Your characters find the forces that drive them, their life forces, in the past. Forwards lies death, generally – there are often powerful emblems of death in your films. So your films challenge the linearity of time towards death by running time backwards, by using time as something circular. 'Little Buddha' is an apotheosis of this circular movement in time on every level; it tries to define time as a circle and to exorcise death. The birth of another child to Jesse's parents is associated with Lama Norbu's death in a way that gives the ending of the film something of the characteristic of the horror genre. Nothing is stated. The mother is pregnant, and there is that little bowl of ashes on the waves. It's like the hand that comes out of the grave at the end of the horror film, suggesting that the story hasn't finished.

About death, I am reminded of some children in New Jersey who saw the film. First of all, I found out that children are terrified about death today. When we were children we didn't have this feeling of death. Death was maybe some old uncle dying, and very few died during my childhood. Children felt themselves to be immortal. Today they see dead children on television in Sarajevo or in Somalia, and they are afraid of death. So not only were they ecstatic at the idea of reincarnation, because it was a way of fighting death, but also when I asked them, "But isn't it sad that this nice Lama Norbu dies at the end of the film?", they replied: "Oh, but he's coming back." "What do you mean, he's coming back?" I asked. "He's in the belly of Jesse's mother." Which frankly wasn't really the idea. They were ecstatic because the Lama was coming back, death

wasn't the end, everybody was coming back, the Lama was already there; he would be a very nice brother or sister for Jesse.

But you were talking about the bowl full of ashes, slowly approaching the Seattle skyline, and about a horror film... I can accept that. But for me it is more a dangerous image. It made me think of what Freud said when he landed in the United States. He said: "You welcome me, but I come bringing the plague." The plague was psychoanalysis. So there was an element of danger in this great thing which was coming. And in fact I thought that this little bowl with a few ashes in it held the potential danger of something very important arriving, a new world, a new energy, a new philosophy. And I even imagined there being an immigration officer on the beach saying, "What is that? We shall have it analysed" – you know how strict they are when you enter the United States, they ask you "Are you carrying any fruit, any salami...?" But that idea is so exciting. It is the flow of continuity, the message arriving.

'Little Buddha' depicts an ideal childhood, where the son is deluged with fatherly love, protection and authority, and yet is at the same time omnipotent. Is this a dream of an impossible utopia?

But this is a very accurate description of the position of a *tulku* – a found reincarnation. Before the shooting of *Little Buddha* I saw a movie called *The Reincarnation of Khensur Rimpoche*, directed by Tenzing Sonam and Ritu Sarin, a beautiful documentary about a monk who goes to Tibet, smuggles a child out of Tibet, takes him to the Dalai Lama and to the oracle, and is told: "Yes, this is the reincarnation of your master." He takes the boy to his monastery in southern India, and the whole movie is informed by the relationship between the tutor and the boy. It shows a man who becomes for this boy father and mother. He gives the boy food, he washes him and he plays with him. At the same time the boy is the reincarnation of his teacher. So he is tremendously respectful of this boy. And I thought: but isn't that the perfect relationship we should have with children? Affection and respect. In Tibetan Buddhism it is respect because the children are the masters. But we should translate that into western terms.

There was a line in *Before the Revolution* which came back to me the other day. When Fabrizio goes with Cesare to the Festa dell'Unità, which for him in 1964 was a kind of celebration of reformism rather than revolution, he says, "a world in which sons may be the fathers of their own fathers." In some way I am trying to simplify everything you said... I mean, not to simplify it but to move the aim from the psychoanalytical approach you had: the child being in some way fed in his omnipotence by all this fathering. I am trying to see it from

Michael Powell was an orientalist when he made 'Black Narcissus'. And I cannot help thinking that kitsch is an essential part of talking today about Siddhartha

another point of view, which is the point of view of tutor and *tulku*. The point of departure for the position of the boy and the other characters is very much based on what is traditionally the relationship between the first searcher lamas of an incarnation – they call them bounty hunters – and the children.

You have been describing the response that pleased you in the audience as being an emotional one rather than a philosophical one. So presumably this love and respect, combined with an acceptance of the authority of the child, is directed at the public on an emotional level, and that is how you want them to respond. I asked you the question in a psychological way, but you responded to it in a historical and theological way, which doesn't entirely tally with the way you have been describing your address to the viewer.

Yes, because I was trying to explain it. I wanted to explain my effort to be invaded by material from the original world of Tibetan Buddhism. I think we should always try as much as possible to be inspired by things that come from *that* world and from *that* culture. Not just that culture described by me, a westerner with all my background, but made to sound through me. I become like a speaker which is enriched by things that belong to that culture and so plays back its sound. I feel like a mouthpiece, a servant of that reality and of that culture.

I want to see how this would work on the level of dialogue, which is the communication you are setting up between yourself and the audience. Let's say, your imaginative recreation of the relationship between Lama Norbu and Jesse is an object of pleasure, and is a sort of emotional stimulus to the audience. Now, how are you imagining this? As a sort of nostalgia in the audience? I don't think so, because you project it as almost didactic – as an aspiration, an ideal.

Yes. To a certain extent I was thinking a lot of Rossellini's TV movies, which were very didactic. Rossellini was a teacher who was trying to teach in his way, because he thought that television had the great potential of being a school. I think television could be the greatest university, but it prefers instead to be a moral supermarket. But since I don't like to be a teacher, I was also thinking of steering around the problem, of avoiding as much as possible teaching Buddhism and trying much harder to give back to the audience, or better to share with them, the emotion I felt in discovering Buddhism.

I'll give you an example. I spent time with an old Tibetan meditator who didn't speak any English, while I didn't speak any Tibetan, and we just sat in front of each other. The only communication was through the eyes, and through the graceful *mudra* which he made with his beautiful hands. We meditated together, and we looked at each other. And suddenly I felt that I was living at that very moment what Buddhism is reminding us of all the time. Our culture is based on duality: conflict, good and evil, god and the devil, the victor and the vanquished. Here we had another duality, the master and the pupil. Suddenly, and you know how suspicious I am of spiritualistic, mysterious things, I felt that there was a kind of communion between us, and that there was no more duality. No longer master and pupil, but a unity. And afterwards – it was one or two months before shooting – I was obsessed with



Beyond conflict: Keanu Reeves as Siddhartha in Bertolucci's 'Little Buddha'

how I could make a film that would convey that sensation, for it was a sensation, and not an action. I feel there is a moment in the film when you get a strong feeling of something like that towards Lama Norbu, and it is during his meditation and death. That is the feeling I had when I was shooting the death of Lama Norbu. *And that is the relationship which is set up between the lama and Jesse's father?*

The dying lama is the *metteur en scène* of the enthronement, because when the father comes into the lama's room he sees the old lama closing his eyes and smiling, imagining the enthronement of the children, which is the accomplishment of his mission. The lama is meditating and dying, and Jesse's father sits with him, watching him, and I wanted the father a bit sleepy beside the meditating lama. He dies, and the monks all chant the *Heart Sutra* in his honour. Then time passes. The father enters the *gompa* (church) where the children are, and the children see the lama. The lama is there with them, but the father can't see him.

Here I was trying to let myself be taken over by that culture, and by the feelings that my experience with the great meditator had aroused in me, and trying to pass them on in an immediate way. I was unable to film the *bardo*, which is the lamas' way of dying, and which is described in the *Tibetan Book of Death*. The heart stops; there is no pulse, no breathing, and they can stay for 15 days in the lotus position without their body rotting. Nobody knows why. The Tibetans say, because the mind is still in the body. Then after a while the mind decides to leave the body and the body remains like an old rag. It is very important that it is the *mind*, not the soul; all religions talk about the soul, but Buddhism talks about the mind because it is not a religion, it is a philosophy.

It is difficult for me to believe that the mind leaves the body and goes into another body. My relationship with Buddhism is that of an amateur – I would be a liar or an imposter if I called myself a Buddhist. I draw on Buddhism. But

I believe that the whole business of reincarnation in Tibetan culture is a metaphor for a kind of mysticism of continuity, expressing the fact that we are not lost when we die; something remains, perhaps our energy, or neurones that are never disturbed, perhaps our ideas, or our work. It is a celebration of continuity and interdependence. Interdependence is another important Buddhist concept, and so when Siddhartha watches the cremation of the dead body and begins his long process of awakening, we hear Lama Norbu's voiceover saying: "The day he saw suffering and discovered compassion, he was made of them and they were made of him." That is the concept of interdependence. Interestingly, when I saw the film later (and not when I had the lama speak these words), I thought it sounded familiar. It is the last line of *The Spider's Stratagem*, when Athos' son has to make a speech to the old men of the town and says: "A man is made of all other men, and the others are made of him", which is a quotation from Sartre. When we say *tout se tient*, that is interdependence.

You are projecting this film with so much hope that people will...

The aim is low key. My hope is to open the eyes for a glimpse of something, my hope is to trigger a curiosity about something. I can't teach or ask anything more than just for others to participate in my emotional discovery of Buddhism. When I made *1900*, or when I made political movies in the 60s and 70s, at first I thought: "Oh, people will come out of *1900* and run to the nearest branch of the Communist Party and become members", and I laughed. It is not like that. Everything is part of a wider cultural flowing movement. In the same way that I never hoped to convert people of different political persuasions to become Communist militants, so I don't think I can push people to become Buddhist. I just want them to become curious about Buddhism.

A film is a representation. You are describing it as your attempt to represent your seduction by Buddhism, by a

culture and a way of approaching the world and reality. And so the more successful you are in representing its attraction for you, the greater the pleasure for the audience, and its only effect must be to do the same to them – which is a hope, isn't it? It's like trying to reach out and pull them on board.

Right. And that's why, taking all that into consideration, I was determined that the movie should try to be accessible to as many people as possible. That's why I chose the fairy tale, and children, and this kind of absence of ponderousness. There is a major mystery in it, but I think there is a lightness to the film which makes it acceptable. The film could have been threateningly philosophical, but that's what I wanted to avoid. However, I wanted the viewer to feel, if he or she wanted, that behind it lay a fascinating philosophy.

So there is a philosophy there.

The most all-embracing one. Not only that – and I am answering you before you ask me a question that I have been asked quite often... How could I move so easily from Marx and Freud into Buddhism? I think there is a complete consistency in this itinerary, because what Marx and Freud have in common is that they both place man at the centre. Buddhism came in the context of millions of Hindu gods, and said: "We have finished with God, now we have man." The Tibetans are a mountain people like any other mountain people in the world, and yet they alone have developed this extraordinary, sophisticated philosophy which derives from the enormous pleasure they take, a *joie de vivre*, in philosophy. That has been an incredible discovery for me, and I know that I've been able to represent just a tiny part of it. Buddhism saved me from a big depression at a time when I had been deprived of the right to dream of utopias after the fall of the Wall.

*You have described periods of difficulty in your artistic life as periods of depression more than once, and in the past you found images in your films to express an angry struggle against the forces that frustrated you. After various patricides (the father in *The Conformist* was killed), there has come a new phase, there has been a change, and now there is less urgency to react against this aggression, because there is less aggression. But when I am asked whether I feel I have changed after this Buddhist experience, I find it difficult to give an answer. It is difficult to tell through me, but you can tell through the movie whether I have changed or not. This movie – granted that the camera is more or less the same, the eye is the same, and the *mise en scène* – is the first movie I have made that is not completely structured on psychological conflicts, which is not completely exploiting a dramaturgy of conflicts (whether they be psychological conflicts between men and women, between fathers and sons, or political conflicts between fascists and anti-fascists, there are atrocious conflicts in my films). The challenge was to become at one with the subject I am talking about. Also the construction of the film was based on an attempt to see, or maybe on the illusion of seeing, whether it was possible to have a dramaturgy without conflicts, one that is held up by the pillar of a feeling, the feeling of Buddhism.*

'Little Buddha' opens on 29 April

The great film-makers of European art cinema are now silent. Why should we value what they achieved? Why did their work so easily descend into pastiche and self-parody? And how far was their appeal based on their freedom to explore sexuality in an 'adult' way? By Thomas Elsaesser

PUTTING ON A SHOW THE EUROPEAN ART MOVIE



● “I don’t want to make films again... This film [*After the Rehearsal*] was supposed to be small, fun, and unpretentious... Two mountainous shadows rise and loom over me. First: Who the hell is really interested in this kind of introverted mirror aria? Second: Does there exist a truth, in the very belly of this drama, that I can’t put my finger on, and so remains inaccessible to my feelings and intuition? ... We should have thrown ourselves directly into filming... Instead we rehearsed, discussed, analyzed, penetrated carefully and respectfully, just as we do in the theatre, almost as if the author were one of our dear departed.” (Ingmar Bergman, 25-26 March 1983, quoted in *Images – My Life in Film*.)

Ingmar Bergman is hardly a name contemporary cinema makes much use of, except as an adjective, usually applied to Woody Allen films that the reviewers find embarrassing. But it has not always been so: in the early and mid-60s Bergman had enormous prestige, swelling in a rising arc from *The Seventh Seal* (1956) to *The Silence* (1963) and *Persona* (1966) before subsiding fitfully with *Hour of the Wolf* (1967) and *Shame* (1968). It was the time of film clubs and the Academy Cinema, and I distinctly remember a programming meeting of the Sussex University film society which broke up in disarray over the question of whether it was possible to call both *Wild Strawberries* and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* great films (we settled for Fritz Lang’s *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt* and were lynched by our audience). The row led me to start a film magazine, having discovered in *Cahiers du cinéma* Godard’s eulogy ‘Bergmanorama’ practically next to his piece on Sam Fuller’s *Forty Guns*. For at the height of middle-class Bergmanomania (in the pages of *Sight and Sound*, for instance) and *Movie’s* ‘Nicholas, not Satyajit’, Godard taught us that the cinema (or *le cinéma*) was one and indivisible. Especially when, like Godard, you were intent on reinventing it.

“*Summer with Monika* is the most original film by the most original of filmmakers. It’s for today’s cinema what *Birth of a Nation* was for the classical cinema, it’s *And God Created Woman*, but fully achieved, without putting a foot wrong, a film of a total lucidity with regards to both its dramatic and moral structure as well as its mise-en-scene.” (Godard in *Arts*, 30 July 1958.) Reading what Bergman has to say about *Summer with Monika* in *Images* (“I have never made a less complicated film. We simply went off and shot it, taking great delight in our freedom”) and then watching it on video, Godard’s enthusiasm is understandable: it is a glorified, glorious home movie, a hymn to a young woman’s sensuality, and for the director of *A bout de souffle* clearly an open invitation to mix Rossellini and *Rebel without a Cause*.

Reviews in Britain were more circumspect. In *The Listener* (9 July 1959) John Weightman, “after recently assimilating a new batch of four films by Ingmar Bergman, made between 1949 and 1953”, reflects on the director’s “extraordinary unevenness of quality. How can he be at once so subtle and so unsubtle?” Weightman disliked *Wild Strawberries* and *The Seventh Seal*, but liked *Summer with Monika*, along with *Three Strange Loves* (aka *Thirst*) and *A Lesson in Love*,

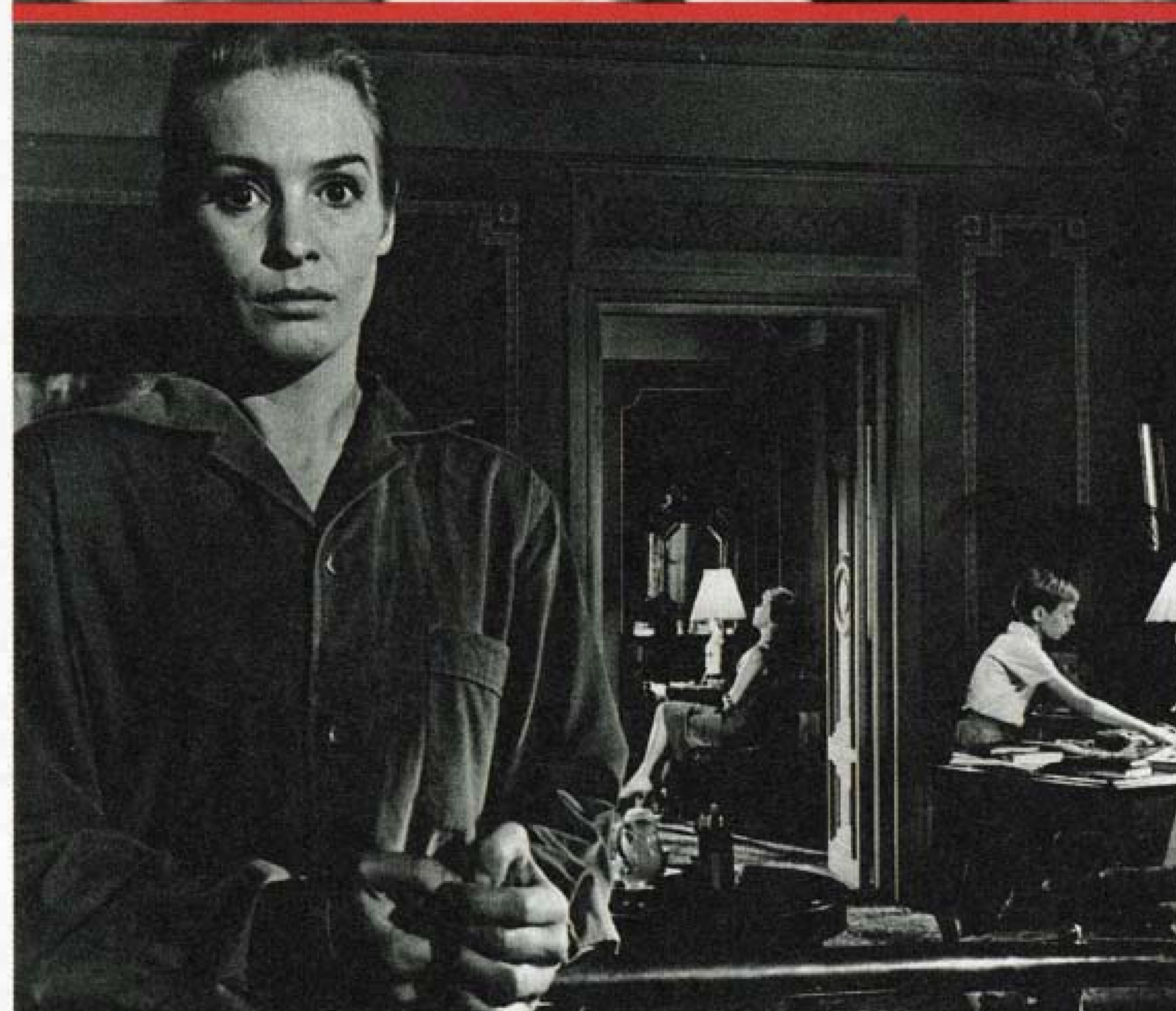
mainly because of its poetic (i.e. neo-realist) qualities: Bergman “reflects the instability of the couple’s relationship in the changing mood of water and sky”, the acting is of “uncanny accuracy”, and in *Three Strange Loves* and *Monika* “the two young husbands are perfect examples of the decent, naive, Scandinavian male who is driven nearly frantic by the vagaries of the female.” The last point is nicely offset by Bergman’s description (in *The Magic Lantern*) of how he fell in love with Harriet Andersson during the making of *Summer with Monika*, and how pleased they were when it turned out that they had to re-shoot most of the outdoor footage because a faulty machine at the lab tore up several thousand metres of the negative.

But Weightman ends his review on a now familiar note: “In putting all these characters and moments of life on to the screen in so many brilliant, if fragmentary episodes, Bergman has done something for Sweden that no-one, to my knowledge, is doing for England. But there may be a parallel in France. Two or three young French directors, like Bergman, have deliberately turned down attractive foreign offers and international stars in order to produce films that have a local, home-made or hand-made character. The camera is again being used as a private eye, as a means of expressing a single yet complex view. This return to the artisan tradition is an interesting

development, even though some of the initial products have all the defects of first novels... The cinema is such a rich art form and the poetry of the camera so much more facile than poetry in language, that it is easy for the filmmaker to get drunk on the possibilities of his medium. I think Bergman is slightly drunk in this way.”

Quick Hollywood, slow Europe

Weightman’s essay contains such a handy compendium of the terms which made Bergman and others the icons of auteur cinema that it prompts the question of what has happened to those towering representatives of European art cinema? Or more precisely, what can still hold together the idea of the ‘auteur’ and that of a ‘national cinema’ (as it also applied to the late Fellini, or to New German Cinema in the 70s, or British cinema in the Thatcher 80s)? Weightman already sees what Bergman has “done for Sweden” in the double perspective we have inherited: the quintessential and clichéd of a nation’s character embodied in personal or ‘poetic’ cinema, and the defensive stance of “hand-made” films against slick entertainment. For behind the question of the fate of art cinema, of course, lurks that other one, debated *ad nauseam*, aired afresh every year at Cannes or Berlin: the future of European cinema *vis à vis* Hollywood (whether “attractive foreign ►



Through the looking glass: the Grand Guignol of Bergman's 'The Seventh Seal', opposite; the febrile 'Three Strange Loves', left; the terrifying division of 'The Silence', bottom left

A matter of interpretation: Rossellini's 'Rome, Open City', a humanist and anti-fascist tract whose success for audiences lay in its erotic moments, right



◀ offers" or France's GATT reactions about its cinematic patrimony). A few years ago, a Channel 4 programme *Pictures of Europe* neatly assembled all the standard arguments, voiced with varying degrees of pessimism by David Puttnam and Richard Attenborough, Bertrand Tavernier and Paul Verhoeven, Fernando Rey and Dirk Bogarde, Agnès Varda, Wim Wenders and Istvan Szabo. One of the least sentimental was Dusan Makavejev, who probably has more reason than most to be wary of the idea of national cinema, but who also needs to believe in auteur cinema: "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen; living in the twentieth century means learning to be American."

In academic film studies, the Hollywood versus Europe question seems at times like the founding myth of the discipline, so much so that it is usually discussed under separate headings: the economic case (Thomas Guback's chapter in Tino Balio's *The American Film Industry*, Kristin Thompson's *Exporting Entertainment*, Ian Jarvie's *Hollywood's Overseas Campaign*); the cultural case (a UCLA- and BFI-sponsored conference in London last year was partly devoted to the topic); and the formal case (either early cinema scholars' debate about Europe's deep staging and slow cutting versus Hollywood's shallow staging and fast cutting, or a difference in story-telling). This last distinction is outlined by David Bordwell in *Narration and the Fiction Film*, where character-centred causality, question-and-answer logic, problem-solving routines, deadline plot structures and a mutual cueing system of word, sound and image are seen as typical of 'classical' cinema, while other narrative conventions are self-conscious and strategic deviations from the classical norm. Film studies, for once, does not seem totally out of touch with the views of the industry. The

norm/deviancy argument could be seen as repeating, at the level of film theory, the hegemony of Hollywood at the cultural and economic level, since all other film styles merely reconfirm the power of the dominant by their very strategies of displacing and circumventing it. Similarly the opposition Europe/Hollywood, as worked out around early cinema, has been echoed since the 20s in the Hollywood complaint that European pictures are too slow for American audiences, a point taken up by many European directors and actors who have worked in both industries.

In *Pictures of Europe*, Paul Verhoeven and Jean-Jacques Annaud described American speed as a "positive quality", as did Beineix, Zanussi and Luc Besson. Puttnam and Almodóvar were more even-handed, while Fernando Rey and Dirk Bogarde preferred the slower delivery of dialogue and less hectic action of European cinema, along with – not surprisingly – Wim Wenders, Bertrand Tavernier and Liv Ullmann. Paul Schrader thought that it boiled down to a fundamentally different attitude to the world: "American movies are based on the assumption that life presents you with problems, while European films are based on the conviction that life confronts you with dilemmas – and while problems are something you solve, dilemmas cannot be solved, they're merely probed or investigated." Schrader's distinction helps tease out some of the formal implications: the norm/deviancy model, for instance, could be criticised for assuming the validity of the problem-solving model for both kinds of cinema. And while his theory doesn't work too well for comedies, which never pretend to solve the issues they raise, it might explain why a happy ending in a European art film is felt to be a cop-out, a fundamentally unserious mode of

closure. After all, isn't one of the characteristics of 'modern' cinema (until recently synonymous with the art film) its metaphysical doubt about master narratives of progress, preferring to be sceptical of linear time and the efficacy of action? Such is the view of Gilles Deleuze, who in his Bergson-inspired study of cinema holds a more dynamic view of Godard's distinction between "action" and "reflection", contrasting instead the movement-image of classical cinema with the time-image of modern cinema.

Transatlantic crossing

Of course, the problem-solving model is not intended to characterise a film-maker's personal beliefs; it is merely posited as the norm underlying, if not both kinds of cinema, then both kinds of audience. American, or 'classical', films are the dominant because they are made ('tailored' was the term already used by King Vidor) for an audience used to Hollywood (and which audience isn't?), while European film-makers are said to express *themselves* rather than (ad)dress the audience. But if one assumes that art cinema merely sets its audiences different kinds of tasks, such as inferring the characters' motivations (as in *The Silence*), reconstructing the time scheme (as in *Cries and Whispers*) or guessing what 'really' happened and what was merely imagined (as in *Persona*), then the difference is one of genre or expectation: the tasks of the art film are intuitively recognised by the spectator and either avoided as a chore or sought as a challenge. And one should remember that among audiences watching art films are also American spectators – in fact, it was the US distribution practice of the art-house circuit which gave the term 'art cinema' its currently accepted meaning.

Indeed, this may be the rub, the point where



Love and art: from the mad love of Godard's 'Pierrot le fou', far left, and the self-obsession of Mastroianni in Fellini's '8½', left, to the melancholy longing of Wenders' 'Wings of Desire', bottom left

a 'cultural' view differs from the cognitive case. By the logic of reception studies, it is ultimately audiences who decide how a film is to be understood, and they often take their cue not only from title, poster, actors or national origin, but from the place where a film is shown, in which case an art film is simply every film screened at an art-house cinema, including old Hollywood movies, as in Nicholas Ray or Sam Fuller retrospectives: the cinema, one and indivisible. It's something of a lame definition, and a 'cultural' argument might avoid the tautology by viewing the Hollywood/Europe opposition merely as a special case of a more general process in which art and other films have assigned and re-assigned to them identities and meanings according to often apparently superficial characteristics, but which on closer inspection provide an instructive map of movie culture that ignores all kinds of stylistic boundaries but speaks eloquently of the life of films in history. One could even call it a map of misreadings. European films intended for one kind of (national) audience or made within a particular kind of aesthetic framework or ideology, for instance, undergo a sea change as they cross the Atlantic and on coming back find themselves bearing the stamp of yet another cultural currency. The same is true of Hollywood films: what auteur theory saw in them was not what the studios or even the directors intended, but this did not stop another generation of American viewers from appreciating what the *Cahiers* critics extracted from them.

If this is now a commonplace about Hollywood, it is just as true about European art cinema. The qualities for which film-makers were praised were not necessarily what the audiences liked about their movies, and what made the films famous was not always what made

them successful. In the case of Italian neo-realism, for instance, the film-makers' aesthetic-moral agenda included a political engagement, a social conscience, a humanist vision. Subjects such as post-war unemployment or the exploitation of farm labour by the big landowners were part of what made neo-realism a 'realist' cinema, while the fact that it did not use stars but faces from the crowd made it a 'poetic' cinema. Yet a film like *Rome, Open City* – about the Italian resistance braving the German Gestapo with communist partisans and Catholic priests making common cause against the enemy – represented only a particular (and short-lived) political compromise, while with established performers such as Anna Magnani and Aldo Fabrizi it was not exactly a movie that used lay actors. *Rome, Open City* became a success abroad for many reasons, including its erotic, melodramatic and atmospheric qualities. In one often reproduced shot there is a glimpse of Anna Magnani's exposed thighs as she falls, gunned down by the Germans, while in another scene a glamorous German female agent seduces a young Italian woman into a lesbian affair and supplies her with cocaine. To American audiences, unused to such fare, the labels 'art' and 'European' began to connote a very particular kind of realism, to do with explicit depiction of sex and drugs rather than political or aesthetic commitment.

Bergman is crucial here. Respected in the early 60s for his films of existential angst and bleak depictions of religious doubt, he was able to get finance for his films from Svensk Filmindustri in part because in the art houses of America graphic portrayals of sexual jealousy or violence as in *Sawdust and Tinsel* or *The Virgin Spring*, or of a woman masturbating (in *The Silence*) defined adult cinema for the generation

prior to the 'sexual revolution'. When in the mid-60s other film-makers in Europe (Denmark, Germany) began to make films for which the label 'adult' was a well-understood euphemism, and when the Americans themselves relaxed censorship, the art-film export suffered a decline as an economic factor for European national cinemas (in Italy, for instance). But it remained a cultural and artistic force, above all for subsequent generations of more or less mainstream American directors from Arthur Penn to Woody Allen and Martin Scorsese to Francis Ford Coppola, and also for the academy: without the European art and auteur cinema, film studies might never have found a home in American universities.

What can we call this re-assignment of meaning, this fluctuation of critical, cultural and economic currency between one country and another? A misunderstanding of the film-maker's intention? An acknowledgment that as many Bergmans exist as there are audiences recognising something of novelty interest or spiritual value in his films? Or just an integral part of what we mean by 'art cinema' (and, finally, by any form of cinema), where the primary economic use-value is either irrelevant (because of government subsidies, as in the case of Bergman), or has already been harvested, leaving a film or a film-maker's work to find its status on another scale of values? It is what forms a 'canon' (see recent *Sight and Sound* essays by Peter Wollen and Ian Christie), or makes a film a 'classic' (see the slim volumes in the BFI Publishing series).

In which case, the old idea of European films as expressive of their national identities would appear far-fetched. It would suggest that 'national cinema' makes sense only as a relation, not as an essence, being dependent on ►

◀ other kinds of film-making, such as commercial/international, to which it supplies the other side of the coin and thus functions as the subordinate term. Yet a national cinema by its very definition must not know that it is a relative or negative term, for then it would lose its virginity and become that national whore which is the heritage film. Instead, the temptation persists to look beyond the binarism towards something that defines a national cinema ‘positively’, such as “the decent, naive, Scandinavian male... driven nearly frantic by the vagaries of the female.” Another positive definition is of a national history as a counter-identity. Such might be the case with the films of Zhang Yimou or Chen Kaige’s *Farewell My Concubine*, fanning out towards a broader media interest in Chinese, Hong Kong and Taiwanese cinemas in which (to us) complicated national and post-colonial histories set up tantalising fields of differentiation, self-differentiation and protest. For these films, international (i.e. European) festivals are the markets that can assign different kinds of value, from politico-voyeuristic curiosity to auteur status, setting in motion the circulation of new cultural capital beyond the prospect of economic circulation (art-cinema distribution, a television sale).

One conceivable conclusion is that both the old Hollywood hegemony argument and the post-modern paradigm (it’s what audiences make of films that decides their value) hide a more interesting relationship in which national cinemas and Hollywood are not only communicating vessels, but (to change the metaphor) exist in a space set up like a hall of mirrors, in which recognition, imaginary identity and miscognition enjoy equal status. It suggests that Bergman’s carefully staged self-doubt, Weightman’s prophetic faith in his early poetic cinema and American audiences’ *frisson* at the ‘mature’ director’s candid look at sexual obsessions and violent marital strife may have a common denominator. Retrospectively, negatively, by a kind of paring away, they delineate the slim ground occupied by an auteur who also, like Bergman, has to signify a national cinema: high culture themes, stylistic expressivity, that indeterminacy of reference critics prized as ‘realism’. By contrast French cinema is a national cinema with such a diversity of strands that it makes its auteurs (Godard, Resnais, Truffaut, Rivette) almost marginal figures in the overall constellation.

Auteur cinema today may not be dead, but what we mean by an auteur has shifted somewhat: for Europe and America, it is no longer about self-doubt or self-expression, metaphysical themes or a realist aesthetic. The themes that still identify Bergman as an auteur would today be mere affectations, a filmmaker’s white carnation in his button-hole. Instead, auteurs now dissimulate such signatures of selfhood as Bergman sported, even when they believe or doubt as passionately as he did. Authority and authenticity lie nowadays in the way film-makers use the cinema’s resources, which is to say in their command of the generic, the expressive, the excessive, the visual and the visceral. From David Lynch to Jane Campion, from Jonathan Demme to

Stephen Frears, from Luc Besson to Dario Argento – all are auteurs and all are valued for their capacity to concentrate on a *tour de force*, demonstrating qualities not so far removed, finally, from Bergman, “drunk on the possibilities of his medium.”

Bergman and Corman

Reading Bergman’s *Images – My Life in Film* (in fact two years’ worth of interviews with Lasse Bergström with the questions cut out and bits from the director’s work books and *The Magic Lantern* pasted in) with this in mind leaves one a little disappointed. One learns about Bergman’s dislike of colour (because it takes away mystery), the importance of lighting (and of Sven Nykvist), and that some of his early films were devised in order to experiment with complicated camera movements. But he says next to nothing about many of the other things that make him a great *film* director – his use of close-ups, his work on the soundtrack, the composition of incredibly complex yet fluid action spaces within the frame in both indoor and outside scenes. Biographical details, childhood memories, moral introspection, the theatre, actors and actresses, music and music-making make up a loosely woven narrative that discards chronology and groups the films under such oddly coy titles as ‘Dreams Dreamers’, ‘Jests Jesters’, ‘Miscreance Credence’, ‘Farces Frolics’. Often Bergman confesses of this or that film that he doesn’t have much to say about its making. Contrary to the title, there is little here about images. Instead, what holds the book together is a daunting effort to account for the process of story-conception, of what mood to be in when writing, what memory to follow up on, what dream to cross-fertilise with an incident he has read about, what well of anguish to tap when the plot seems to wander off in the wrong direction.

It reminds one of how much legitimation and cultural capital Bergman the film director still derived from writing, from being an author as well as an auteur, and at the same time how removed he was from the routines of Hollywood scriptwriting – from story-boarding or using the script as the production’s financial and technical blueprint. In this, he conforms to the cliché of the European director: improvisation on the set or on location, the most intense work taking place with the actors, the film taking shape as the director penetrates the inner truth of the various motifs that the story or situation first suggested to him. Bergman, the Important Artist.

The notion that Bergman’s films are autobiographical has both given them coherence and authenticated them as important. In a sense, *Images* supports some of the earnest exegeses of his work: one finds the theme of the artist caught between imagining himself a god and knowing he is a charlatan and conjurer; the motif of the lost companion/partner in an alien city, a war zone, an isolated hospital; the transfer of identity and the destructive energies of the heterosexual couple. But Bergman is also candid about his own compliance with his admirers’ interpretative projections. *Images* opens with the admission that *Bergman on*

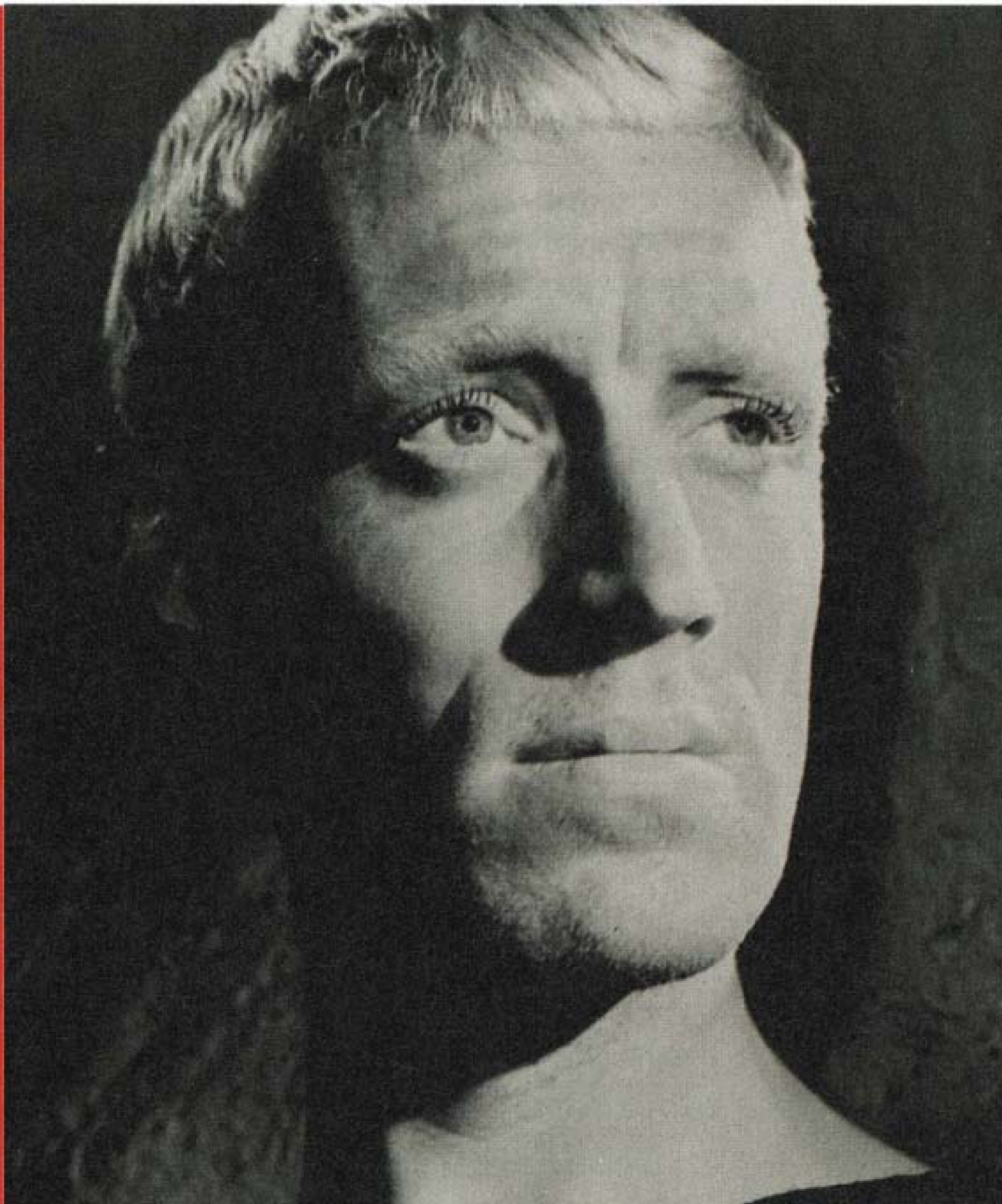
Bergman, a book of interviews from 1968, was “hypocritical” because he was too anxious to please. And in a similar vein, he now thinks the notion, endorsed by himself in the preface to Vilgot Sjöman’s *Diary with Ingmar Bergman*, that *Through a Glass Darkly*, *Winter Light* and *The Silence* form a trilogy is a “rationalization after the fact”: “the ‘trilogy’ has neither rhyme nor reason. It was a Schnapps-Idee, as the Bavarians say, meaning that it’s an idea found at the bottom of a glass of alcohol.” (And yet a look at the filmographies of Godard, Antonioni, Truffaut, Wenders, Herzog, Kieślowski shows how important a prop the idea of the trilogy is for the self-identity of the European auteur.)

Reading *Images* a little against the grain of its own declaration of authenticity, it seems just conceivable that Bergman’s claim to being one of the cinema’s great auteurs rests most firmly on his ability to dissimulate: that the big themes, the flaunting of moral doubt and metaphysical pain, represent not a personal plight transfigured into art but the doubly necessary pre-text for a cinematic *tour de force*. The big themes were doubly necessary, I am suggesting, because they helped to define his cinema as a national cinema and because they allowed him to reinvent himself as a filmmaker: prerequisites for creating an *oeuvre* that could be recognised as such at a time when Hollywood still had genres and stars rather than directors as stars.

As to Bergman the figurehead of a national cinema, *Images* makes clear how many overt and covert threads connect his films to the key authors and themes of Scandinavian literature. His immense achievement was to have recognised and made his own dramatic situations, themes and characters that echoed those of the great Scandinavian playwrights, Strindberg and Ibsen especially, and to have used his life-long work in the theatre as both a permanent rehearsal of his film ideas in progress, and as the place to forge the stock company of actors and actresses who give his films their unmistakable look, feel and physical identity: Harriet Andersson and Gunnar Björnstrand, Ingrid Thulin and Max von Sydow, Liv Ullmann and Erland Josephson. Even so private a film as *Persona* uses Strindberg’s one-act play *The Stronger*; even so ostensibly an autobiographical work as *Fanny and Alexander* borrows, apart from its explicit references to *Hamlet*, motifs, names and allusions from Ibsen’s *Wild Duck* and Strindberg’s *The Ghost Sonata* and *Dreamplay*.

Beyond their role of giving him a form (the chamber play) and a set of dramatic conflicts (Ibsen’s bourgeois family falling apart through the “life-lie”; Strindberg’s couple tearing each other to pieces in sexual anguish and hatred), the dramatists Bergman is attached to remind one of the importance of the texture of speech and voice for our idea of a national cinema, and indeed for the European art cinema as a whole. This suggests that one function of auteur cinema as a national cinema, before the advent of television, was to transcribe features of a nation’s cultural tradition as figured in other art forms (the novel, theatre, opera) and to represent them in the cinema. One can follow this process in Bergman’s career, where the films

Uncanny resemblance: Max von Sydow as the Knight in Bergman's *'The Seventh Seal'*, right; Vincent Price as Prince Prospero in Roger Corman's *'The Masque of Red Death'*, below



from the late 50s onwards tend to be more or less self-consciously crafted images, first of the Nordic middle-ages and then of a middle-class Sweden. From *The Seventh Seal* to *The Virgin Spring* and *The Magician*, from *Wild Strawberries* to *Hour of the Wolf*, from *Cries and Whispers* to *Fanny and Alexander*, there is an uneasy acknowledgment of the identity others have thrust upon him as a national icon. One response is parody or pastiche: is it merely hindsight that discovers in Bergman's big themes a wonderful excuse for putting on a show? Re-seeing *The Seventh Seal* I was amazed and amused by its Grand-Guignolesque elements, not just Death and the strolling players but even the young girl's death at the stake. Its deftly staged spectacle, atmospheric touches, wonderful sleights of hand and sarcastic humour prompted the perhaps blasphemous thought that Max von Sydow's Knight back from the Crusades was closer in spirit to Vincent Price in a Roger Corman film than to Dreyer's *Day of Wrath* or Bresson's *Trial of Joan of Arc*.

Hence, perhaps, a trauma that seems to have haunted Bergman briefly, even more urgently than his arrest by bungling Swedish bureaucrats for tax fraud: the fear of an arrest of his creativity. The tax business resulted in a six-year-long self-exile to Germany, and seems to have wounded him to the quick. But so did the pun in a French review of *Autumn Sonata* (with Ingrid Bergman) which suggested that "Bergman was not only directing Bergman, but doing Bergman." *Images* is in a sense the record of having laid that ghost to rest, for it gives rise to the theme of an artist becoming a pastiche of himself, a fear Bergman sees confirmed in the later work of Tarkovsky, Fellini and especially of Buñuel, whom he accuses of a lifetime of self-parody. Tying in with the "Schnapps-

Idee" of the auteur trilogy, self-parody is perhaps the fate Bergman believes lies in store for all European auteurs who outlive both the economic and cultural moment of the national cinema with which they are identified. From more recent times, the cases of Herzog and Wenders come to mind (though the counter-examples are as interesting: Rossellini, when he began to make his great historical films for television, or Godard, when he took on video as if as a way of taking back his own earlier films, commenting on them by spraying them with ever more metaphysical 'graffiti'). In Bergman's case, the farewell to the cinema was not only the signal to carry on with the theatre, but it also led him to reinvent himself as an autobiographer, novelist, scenarist, and the self-reflexive, slyly exhibitionist essayist he shows himself in *Images*, treating his big themes with an irony not always present when he was turning them into films.

Ghosts and dreams

So how does one go about writing Bergman back into the contemporary cinema, into a film history other than that of the European auteur/national cinema? I would probably start not with *Wild Strawberries* (usually considered his stylistic breakthrough to a 'modern' cinema), but with a film from eight years earlier which strikes me, for much of its 83 minutes, as being as timelessly 'modern' as all great films are: *Three Strange Loves* (1949), which though cast in the form of a journey, rather like *Wild Strawberries*, has a searing visual intelligence, a pulse, a body, a shape, a fury, as if made by someone "drunk on the possibilities of his medium". Bearing in mind the febrile energy and extraordinary urgency with which *Three Strange Loves* moves between its characters' past and present

predicaments and the various people to whom the central couple were or are tied, that old art-cinema staple of the reality/illusion divide, which is one of Bergman's big themes in so many of his films, takes on a new meaning, becoming part of the heroic effort to wrest from cinema, that medium of time and space, a logic neither enslaved to chronological time nor to physical space, but instead creating another reality altogether.

In his best moments Bergman manages to render palpable a sense of indeterminacy such as has rarely existed in the cinema since the great silent European films of the 20s (Murnau, Lang, Dreyer): not psychological or psychoanalytical, but 'phenomenal'. In this sense, Bergman inscribes himself in an art-cinema, non-classical tradition, as one of those directors whose craft goes into making possible those imperceptible transitions between past and present, inner and outer space, memory, dream and anticipation which also give contemporary post-classical cinema its intellectual energy and emotional urgency. Bergman, in order to achieve this kind of energy, experimented in *Three Strange Loves* with an extraordinary fluid camera and complex camera set-ups. Realising how much more difficult it was to achieve spatial dislocation in the sound film, he nevertheless did so brilliantly in some of his subsequent films – through the soundtrack in *The Silence* and the lighting in *Persona*, as well as through the floating time of presence and memory, anticipation and traumatic recollection of *Cries and Whispers*.

In this respect, Bergman's film-making is as modern as Godard thought it was. *Three Strange Loves* to this day gives one the feeling that this is the kind of cinema that every generation has to reinvent for itself, that the cinema always starts again with this kind of vulnerability and radicalness. If it means being branded as art cinema, so be it, at least until it becomes the prisoner of the body it seems fated to create for itself, that of an auteur's cinema pastiching its own cultural self-importance.

Liv Ullmann and Bob Hope

One of the most poignant passages in *Images* occurs when Bergman discusses Liv Ullmann's primal scream at the climax of *Face to Face*: "Dino De Laurentiis was delighted with the film, which received rave reviews in America. Now when I see *Face to Face* I remember an old farce with Bob Hope, Bing Crosby and Dorothy Lamour. It's called *Road to Morocco*. They have been shipwrecked and come floating on a raft in front of a projected New York in the background. In the final scene, Bob Hope throws himself to the ground and begins to scream and foam at the mouth. The others stare at him in astonishment and ask what in the world he is doing. He immediately calms down and says: 'This is how you have to do it if you want to win an Oscar.' When I see *Face to Face* and Liv Ullmann's incredibly loyal effort on my behalf, I still can't help but think of *Road to Morocco*." *Ingmar Bergman's 'Images – My Life in Film'* was recently published by Bloomsbury, £20. A selection of Bergman's films is available from Tartan Video, see special offer on page 2

Despite the title of his forthcoming film, 'Being Human', Robin Williams' characters have always seemed not quite human – from the alien of 'Mork and Mindy' through 'Popeye' to 'Mrs Doubtfire'. By Lizzie Francke

BEING ROBIN

● It seems no coincidence that Robin Williams' forthcoming film is called *Being Human*. The title alone suggests a possible reading of the comedian's screen career. In it he plays a character called Hector who crops up in four separate stories with settings that jump from the Stone Age to the present day. The plot hints that the film might be about the evolution of *homo sapiens*, specifically the male variety. And isn't that just what Williams has been about too – since he fell to earth as Mork, the alien sent to find out what human beings were all about in the sit-com *Happy Days*? One can muse on the thought that the baby-boomer boy with the polymorphous personality, as expressed in those loose-tongued verbal riffs and cartoon-like malleability, is coming of age – that Williams the alien has finally become Williams the man.

Not that Williams has been devoid of humanity – he bulges with it. Cuddly, cute and hirsute, his screen persona has largely been played out in such soft and sensitive characters as the shy Dr Sayer who brings his encephalitic patients back to life in *Awakenings*, the iconoclastic English teacher John Keating who rouses his boys with Walt Whitman in *Dead Poets Society*, even the army DJ Adrian Cronauer who agitates the authorities with his explosive, conscience-raising patter in *Good Morning, Vietnam*. It didn't work out when he tried to be a womanising swine in *Cadillac Man* – the car-salesman patois, cigarillo moustache and shiny Italian shoes didn't fit. Williams needs roles that maintain the fluffy reputation he acquired with Mork, a creation which became so popular that he could soon scamper off with his very own series, *Mork and Mindy*.

To understand the Mork phenomenon is to understand something of the Williams persona. In 70s sit-com land, Mork was very much the alien. With his rainbow jerseys and braces and feather-cut hair, he looked like a mime-school drop-out. He was a somewhat androgynous figure, but completely lacking any of the hip sexual ambiguity of that other Starman of the decade, David Bowie. The series, as with many an odd-couple sit-com, made a point of fudging what exactly the relationship between Williams and Pam Dawber's all-American gal Mindy was about. Indeed Mork, who was noted for his topsy-turvy behaviour, could be considered a symptom of the changes of the 70s, as



The alien has landed: Robin Williams as Mork



A family man: 'Mrs Doubtfire'

feminism began to question notions of masculinity and femininity and the old models of maleness were revealed to be far from satisfactory. In the pilot episode, Mindy has just ceremoniously dumped one predatory jock when she chances upon her new pal, a homunculus freshly hatched from his spaceship egg. Soon the caring Mork was installed in the popular imagination as an example of the new man about the house, even finding a job at a children's play centre. All very cosy – but with a sexuality that bordered on the infantile, Mork was hardly a lover from another planet.

Williams' characters have continued to be alienated in some way from women – and the cute and sensitive factor, the presumed innocence, always masks anything problematic in this. As Sayer in *Awakenings* he plays the absent-minded professor who is only able to ask the nice nurse (Julie Kavner) out for coffee in the final frame (Leonard, played by Robert De Niro, the patient who wakes out of a 20 year sleep, seems more savvy about women than the doc-

tor). And in *The Fisher King* Williams plays the widowed derelict Parry, who in the dark ruins of Manhattan develops a crush on the mousy secretary Lydia. In such roles Williams acts the bashful adolescent who has to be primed about date etiquette. There is something intrinsically embryonic about his masculinity here – as if he were a man waiting to be redrawn.

Certainly it seems appropriate that his cinema debut was as the eponymous hero of *Popeye* in Robert Altman's live-action version of E. C. Segar's comic strip. It may seem pertinent that Williams should appear as a cartoon character in a film produced by Disney, but under Altman's direction and with Jules Feiffer's script, this one had Freudian think-bubbles floating off frame. What else could one make of the story of a one-eyed sailor with inflated pecs who cruises the seven seas in search of the father he hasn't seen since he was two? 'I yam with I yam' is his theme song, but one wasn't quite sure what that might be. With Popeye's Oedipal voyage going in circles as his father kidnaps the foundling Swee'pea whom Popeye has recently adopted as his own, there is nothing particularly straight about this film.

If Altman's movie invites a shrewder reading of what is perceived as children's fare, notions of 'innocence' nevertheless continue to dominate the Williams screen persona. Certainly that is the factor that shrouds what might be going on in *Dead Poets Society*. Set in a New England boarding school in 1959, the film is credited as a indictment of stuffy authoritarianism. Williams plays the bright-eyed English teacher Keating who on taking up a post at his *alma mater* encourages the young lads to rip up the lit. crit. rule book and to think for themselves. All good liberating stuff – but as Tania Modleski has pointed out in her book *Feminism without Women*, it is in fact a "profoundly regressive film". Clinging to a notion of boyhood sexual innocence, *Dead Poets Society* systematically denies any homoerotic content to the situation, so much so that this bubbles up all over. Far from advocating rebellion (the film is set, after all, on the eve of the 60s), it in fact displays a nostalgic desire for a closeted world, as Modleski describes it, a "mythical moment in the past that it appears to repudiate but really longs for: a moment of repression and discipline and stable authority, represented by fathers, high school principals and dead

RONALD GRANT



The descent of man: Williams in the forthcoming 'evolutionary' movie 'Being Human'

poets." In this Eden, male sexuality could be construed as a simple thing.

The secret Dead Poets Society formed by Keating's golden lads in honour of their teacher provides a clue to what might be going on in two of Williams' other films, *The Fisher King* and *Hook*. Rallying together in a cave around a midnight camp fire, Keating's boys would seem to be subscribing to a prototype of the Iron John ethos as they devise various rituals involving chanting and face-painting to mark their transition to manhood. The same rites surface in the later films, though as more obvious explorations of fabulous mythologies, be these Arthurian legend or the stories of J. M. Barrie. Both movies play on the idea that contemporary man has lost an essence which once retrieved will seal his happiness. Like *Dead Poets Society*, these movies are fantasies of regression to mystical Edens where brotherhoods exist that are uncomplicated by sexual desires, gay or otherwise. In *The Fisher King*, Parry's flopsy-bunny headgear and wide-eyed, naive expres-

sion are typically childlike. Having lost his wife in a shooting incident incited by the radio DJ Jack Lucas, a Howard Stern-like motor-mouth played by Jeff Bridges, Parry, also an English teacher, retreats into his own make-believe world which immures him from both his grief and the city squalor that surrounds him. It becomes the equally broken Lucas' quest to save him, including giving him lessons to help him woo the beige-clad Lydia. But Lydia has no place in the happy finale – girlfriends and wives are rarely admitted to these Neverlands. As if by magic she disappears, and the real bond is revealed to be between Parry and Lucas as they lie naked under the stars in Central Park. Of course this is all very man-to-man; the question of homoeroticism is pre-empted by the introduction of another city tramp who has a nice line in Ethel Merman numbers and is signified as gay by a song, a dance and a clone moustache – camp clichés from which Parry and Lucas are determinedly distanced.

As Williams takes on the New Man mantle

and becomes the focus of films preoccupied with revealing how soft-ply man-size can be, he is more often than not demonstrating problems of male integration and individuation. Like *Aladdin's* genie, he ranges all over the place. This is what makes his recent choice (he produced the film, after all) to play Mrs Doubtfire all the more intriguing, especially since the role so overtly toys with his own screen persona. Picking up from *Hook*, here he has another swipe at being a family man. But the bumptious Williams we see at the beginning of the film is more a throwback to Mork. As he parties with his kids and creates for them their very own Eden, complete with fluffy ducks and lambs, his playfulness is seen to be less than appealing, and it is no wonder that his wife Miranda (Sally Field) wishes for a divorce. Consequently Williams is faced with a new quest for completeness. But rather than turning to Iron John, he chooses to invest instead in an Iron-like lady. With the help of his gay brother, he fashions for himself in latex the doughty nanny, Mrs Doubtfire.

As cartoon-like as *Popeye* or *Aladdin*, *Mrs Doubtfire* is a resonant fantasy (given this, it seems bizarre that some critics found it a sticking point that no one noticed that the housekeeper was a man in drag – as if realism had anything to do with it). Williams the boy-child is finally house-trained into a more rounded person, one that Miranda can respect (though not, it is important to note, take back). One could read into it that Williams' individuation is aided by both a female and a gay sensibility, ones that the boy-child in the other films attempted to deny. Certainly by the end of the movie his character is portrayed as a far more positive example of a fellow than the cardboard cut-out Stu, Miranda's new consort, who is about as appetising as the Milk Tray man and hardly presented as a suitable alternative.

Williams may be a cartoon, but he is never cardboard. He needs the flexibility to shape-shift, to keep on his tippy toes. He has become the self-designated Fool, an Everyman, and it would seem he can now presume to accommodate the role of Everywoman too (as if there were no women around to do that). All that humanity – but does he ever answer to what being human is all about?

'Mrs Doubtfire' is on current release; 'Being Human' will be released later this year

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Holding on

I possess a videocassette of Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming* which I guard with the furtive relish of a fetishist.

An explanation may be in order. A video, by its very nature, is hardly an object which would normally be considered rare. A copy, after all, is only ever a dupe away. In fact, with the possible exception of some rather esoteric examples of highly specialised pornography (which I may or may not confess to having seen, depending on my mood), a videotape is something which is usually readily shared, especially among friends.

None of my friends has a dupe of my copy of *The Homecoming*. If they want to see it, they must come to my home, where I will display it to them with the solemnity of a highly respected ritual. If they're really lucky, I'll even play the tape for them on my television.

What makes this tape so rare? I must say that I have no idea of the production's status in Great Britain (where it may well be available at your local greengrocer), but in North America it has found its way to fetish status through a most particular history. The project of making a film of *The Homecoming* was an original commission of the American Film Theater as part of a series based on the highly original concept of taking a number of extraordinary stage productions of famous plays (including Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* and Simon Gray's *Butley*) and filming them, preserving as much of the theatrical quality of the original as possible. The films would then play for limited runs in selected cinemas. After this tour, all the film copies were to be destroyed.

By Atom Egoyan

The Canadian filmmaker finds solace and power in his VHS of Peter Hall's 'The Homecoming', with its cast of wounded beasts

The idea behind this bizarre process was to simulate the ephemeral nature of a stage production, so that the film would exist only in the memory of the few people who were lucky enough to see it during its first (and only) run. I vaguely remember the tour coming to Victoria, the small city on the west coast of Canada where I was raised. It was showcased and promoted as a piece of theatre, and tickets, as I recall, were considerably more expensive than for a regular film.

What happened, inevitably, is that some copies weren't destroyed, and fell into the wrong hands. And so, late one night as I was listlessly scanning through the channels on my television in an insomniac daze, I chanced across a clandestine broadcast of *The Homecoming*. I immediately began to record it on my VCR.

Peter Hall directed this outstanding production, and I find it hard to fault. The performances are uniformly superb, with the classic Lenny/Ruth scene ("You must be connected with my brother in some way") brilliantly played by Ian Holm and Vivien Merchant. The characters lurch their way through John Bury's monochromatic and hauntingly austere set like wounded beasts, and the cumulative effect of the piece is dark, disturbing and devastating (my favourite 3-D effect).

I often find myself seeking solace from this film. Its poetry and twisted sense of compassion and humour have assuaged many moments of despair and confusion. Other people have religion. I have my copy of *The Homecoming*.

Like any fetishist worth his salt, I have a

strange and rather unrealistic relationship with my object of desire. In my fantasy, it is the only copy of the film in existence. I resolutely refuse to make copies of it, and devoted worshippers travel from all corners of the world in pilgrimages to see my videocassette. This fantasy was partially substantiated when I was asked to present a selection of my favourite films for the Cinematheque Ontario. The programmer tried to secure a print of *The Homecoming* and was informed, to my delight, that there were no prints in circulation.

The next step of my fantasy is slightly less plausible. I am approached by a major studio and asked if I will lend them my VHS cassette. They beg me to give them permission to transfer my tape to 70mm Dolby stereo. Or IMAX. In yet another fantasy, Harold Pinter needs to borrow the tape since he's lost all his working drafts and... You get the idea.

What I find most exciting is the notion that something as banal and low grade as a pirate tape might be physically transformed into something special and extraordinary – as special and extraordinary as the material contained on the cassette itself. I want the tape to evolve into a metaphor of my experience of it.

Of course, someone out there actually holds the rights to this film and is probably bemused – if not outraged – at my presumptuous attitude to the question of legal ownership. But true fetishists don't let such matters get in their way. If you feel you have claim to my tape – if you can be so cruel as to believe that it is yours – I challenge you to come and get it. I'll be waiting.



BFI STILL, POSTERS AND DESIGNS

Tales from the crypt

Kim Newman

The Monster Show: A Cultural History of Horror

David J. Skal, W. W. Norton & Co, \$25, 432pp

When asked, probably for the millionth time, why he writes horror fiction, Ramsey Campbell replied, "What makes you think I have a choice?" At a time when the genre is yet again under an attack sustained enough to make its practitioners and followers feel like a persecuted minority, David Skal's excellent, wide-ranging examination of the form in its twentieth-century manifestations underlines Campbell's point.

Skal distinguished himself in the field of horror criticism with the remarkable *Hollywood Gothic: The Tangled Web of 'Dracula' from Novel to Stage to Screen*. *The Monster Show*, which takes a broad view as opposed to concentrating on a single multi-faceted property, is perhaps the most important study of the field since Carlos Clarens' 1967 *An Illustrated History of the Horror Film*. The author again tackles a tangled web, finding connections between photographer Diane Arbus, theatrical impresario Horace Livewright, film-makers Tod Browning and James Whale, actors Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi, novelists Anne Rice, Stephen King and Bret Easton Ellis, the underground history of carnivals and freakshows, TV horror hosts Maila Nurmi (Vampira) and John Zacherle and horror movie magazines.

Despite the European origins of most of the monster pantheon, not to mention directors such as Whale and performers such as Karloff who brought it to life, Skal chooses to tell an American story. He begins with Arbus' freak craze, then flashes back to Browning and Lon Chaney, tracing a particular horror strand to the carnies and medicine shows that inspired Ray Bradbury and Robert Bloch. Only then does he bring in the German silents (discussing *Dr Caligari* intriguingly in the light of its reception in America) and the great British monsters who were to be so thoroughly appropriated by Hollywood that Dracula and Frankenstein wound up as breakfast serials. While the book covers the production of many important horror films (and plays and books), it is as concerned with their reception: for example, by the censorious, who set up boards to prohibit horror in horror films or bar horror comics from the newsstands. And by the fans, who delight in interfacing with the primary sources through such oddities as the US TV horror hosts, who often interrupted and participated in the screening of the films they were presenting – or even, as with one woman interviewed by Skal, by becoming a blood-drinker.

In the light of the latest round of fuss about horror, it is sobering to be reminded that Britain banned the import and exhibition of horror films for the duration of the Second World War (a boom time for the genre in the US). Between 1936 and 1938, it was chiefly protests from Britain which persuaded Hollywood to discontinue production of such films, sending Bela Lugosi's career into a nosedive from which it never recovered. Chronicling the minutiae of the pro- and anti-censorship arguments that revolved around such classic films as *Bride of*

Frankenstein and *Mystery of the Wax Museum*, Skal notes that the very same British establishment which objected to "morbid" movies on the grounds that they presented the medical profession in a bad light was at the same time denying the existence of the real-life equivalents of Dr Moreau and Dr Pretorious in Nazi Germany. The bizarre dance of studio and censor reaches a hilarious climax in a letter by Robert Harris defending the script of the 1936 *The Werewolf of London* against an objection by the Breen Office to the short skirt worn by one of the beast's victims: "The girl, being of the lower class, is wearing a skirt which is not too lengthy, possibly having shrunk when she herself washed it, being quite without money to send it to be regularly cleaned."

The serious side of this silliness is that, as Skal demonstrates in his accounts of the metamorphoses of the genre during two World Wars, the Cold War and Vietnam, horror is sometimes the *only* way of reacting to the world around us. Even the fantastical fairy-tale Universal monsters are perceived as having grown out of the First World War, as demonstrated by a telling battlefield horror story excerpted from the autobiography of Ernest Thesiger, who incarnated Whale's Dr Pretorious. The genre sometimes needs to be out of control, even needs to go too far, to have any function for its creators or consumers. Answering the insistent but entirely spurious attack on horror comics launched by Dr Fredric Wertham in the 50s, US critic Robert Warshow, who disliked his son's taste for *Tales from the Crypt* but decided it was pointless to ban comics in his household, comments: "Ultimately, one suspects, Wertham would like to see our culture entirely hygienic... I myself would not like to live surrounded by the kind of culture Dr Wertham could thoroughly approve of."

More controlled than the grab-bag of Stephen King's *Danse Macabre*, *The Monster Show* conveys the enormous breadth of its subject and dovetails the lives of the creators with the careers of their creations as deftly as any Frankenstein movie. This is the best kind of book about popular culture: it never loses its sense of perspective and humour; presents solid, original research in a field too often raked over by writers who ritually restate the same points; and it manages to be passionate, even angry, when describing individual cases.



Karaoke treatment

Andy Medhurst

Tennessee Williams:

Everyone Else Is an Audience

Ronald Hayman, Yale University Press, £19.95, 268pp

The indiscriminately prolific creator of luxuriously overheated melodramas, the compulsively amorous homosexual vainly searching for true love, the failing artist losing himself in drugs and booze, the golden boy declining into loss and waste – these are the constituent parts of the Tennessee Williams myth, and their tenacity as a version of his life derives from the way they dovetail so neatly with a broader template of tortured creativity that our culture finds irresistible. We like our artists to be unhappy, so it is curiously satisfying to depict Williams as a Van Gogh figure with a few mint juleps and rent boys thrown in.

One might expect a new biography from a major university press written by a respected writer and critic to challenge these stereotypes, but in this perfunctory, unenthusiastic book, Hayman simply rehearses them once more. Most disappointing, he takes completely for granted the idea that the work is the life, that Williams' fictions were nothing but a succession of attempts to exorcise private traumas, and never stops to question this naively reflectionist methodology.

Of course, Williams himself volubly and copiously subscribed to the myth, and was forever telling friends, colleagues and interviewers how each new production revealed another part of his struggle with himself, his family and his past – but for Hayman to take this at face value is an abdication of critical responsibility. Serious analysis can never afford to defer to an artist's estimation of his/her work, otherwise we might have to accept that Meryl Streep is talented, or Kenneth Branagh important.

Inseparable from the tortured artist paradigm is the familiar tale of the tortured queer. The Williams saga's central role in forging this link in the public consciousness would make a fascinating study, but Hayman shuns such intellectual exertions, preferring instead to trot out constructions of homosexuality that are so well worn as to be ready for karaoke treatment – we all know the words, let's sing along. Like a truffle-hound of cheap psychology, Hayman digs for the 'causes' of Williams' sexual predilections (what I'm waiting for is a biography of, say, Warren Beatty that looks into the causes of his *heterosexuality*) and presents his self-loathing with scant consideration of the social stigmatising that engendered it. The book is lightly seasoned with faint disapproval, all the usual adjectives are present and correct; it's only to be expected that Hayman calls a non-monogamous gay man "predatory", but to do so twice in four lines is simply bad writing.

The complex question of how Williams' female protagonists are related to his homosexuality again demands far more sophisticated and sensitive thinking than Hayman brings to bear. Referring to *Sweet Bird of Youth*, Williams claimed in a fine flourish of camp rhetoric that "I was Alexandra del Lago from start to finish" – and there are many other comparable examples in gay

Monstrously morbid:
the classic 'Mystery of the
Wax Museum' was at the
centre of censorship
battles in 30s Britain

Dead men tell no tales: William Holden's narration in 'Sunset Boulevard', right, epitomises the association of speech with death in film noir



Doomed diva: Elizabeth Taylor gave one of her finest performances in Tennessee Williams' 'Cat on a Hot Tin Roof'

male culture: think of Tony Warren and Elsie Tanner, Pedro Almodóvar and Carmen Maura, the Richard Dyer/Celia Johnson interface revealed in the former's recent book on *Brief Encounter*, and what happens to me whenever I watch *Meet Me in St Louis* (I am Esther Smith from start to finish). But all Hayman can offer with regard to Williams and his furiously doomed belles is that their creation allowed him to "bring the feminine side of his personality into play". Right, I see. That's the feminine side as opposed to the masculine side, and of course we only have the two... To call this simplistic would be charitable.

The film versions of Williams' plays are almost totally ignored (although stills from them provide a large proportion of the illustrations). This is an irritating omission given that it was cinema that brought his sensibility into mass consciousness, and that it is in films of Williams' dramas that some of the finest, campest, most delirious female star performances in Hollywood history were delivered (Elizabeth Taylor has never been better than in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *Suddenly Last Summer*). A couple of intriguing nuggets – one of Williams' first published pieces was a school magazine review of the silent *Stella Dallas*, and the intention of creating a film role to tempt Garbo out of retirement brought forth *The Roman Spring of Mrs Stone* – shed light on his relationship with cinema, but otherwise the theatrical focus is unwavering.

It's a concise, informative and accessible enough book, an example of underwhelmingly workmanlike fact-gathering resting on dodgily uncontested assumptions. It might help a rather dense heterosexual doing *Streetcar* for 'A' level, but it takes so few risks and breaks so little new ground that you can only wonder at the writer's motivation (a gap in his diary? A new conservatory to pay for?). A crucial queen like Tennessee deserves better than this.

Murky waters

Paul Kerr

Shades of Noir

Joan Copjec (ed), Verso, £34.95 (hb), £11.95 (pb), 300pp

Film noir casts a long shadow. This year, Patsy Kensit discards a glove Gilda fashion in Pilar Miró's *Prince of Shadows*; Woody Allen, "inspired" by a viewing of *Double Indemnity*, performs a *Rear Window* on a neighbour in *Manhattan Murder Mystery*; *Fatal Instinct*, Carl Reiner's follow-up to his noir spoof *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid*, pastiches everything from *Double Indemnity* to *Basic Instinct*; Steve Kloves' *Flesh and Bone* takes rural noir into Sam Shepard territory; and Peter Medak's *Romeo Is Bleeding* features Lena Olin as the ultimate *femme fatale* and a flashback narrated in voice-over by Gary Oldman.

As Marc Vernet points out in the most interesting chapter in *Shades of Noir*, these tropes are detectable in other genres, though not in such concentrated form. Several contributors conduct a post-mortem, bent on determining the causes of birth and death, and on identifying the body – was it a genre? And is it really dead? Vernet's chapter stands alone, though, in redefining the genre and refining the arguments about its ancestry. Janet Bergstrom's essay



BFI STILL, POSTERS AND DESIGNS (2)

on the reliance of Lang's *Blue Gardenia* on Vera Caspary's novel unearths new material on the film's production history, and later chapters investigate other novelistic sources, such as Chester Himes, Raymond Chandler and Cornell Woolrich. David Reid and Jayne L. Walker convincingly argue that Woolrich's prose style in particular, with its fractured perceptions, presaged noir's Hollywood expressionism. They cite as evidence the opening lines of his 1941 novel *The Black Curtain*: "First everything was blurred. Then he could feel hands fumbling around him, lots of hands. They weren't actually touching him; they were touching things that touched him. He got their feel one step removed."

In general, this collection sheds more light on its own *zeitgeist* than on noir's classic period. A politically correct rather than cinematically specific hindsight undermines several essays. Thus while one feminist contributor bewails the genre's "anti-woman bias" another applauds "the quality screen time devoted to the woman" in *Blue Gardenia*. Attempts to refocus recent Hollywood movies such as *Blade Runner*, *Blue Velvet* or *Terminator 2* through a noir lens are similarly problematic. In the end the overall sensibility of such films is post-modern rather than post-noir. Manthia Diawara's initially promising chapter on noir by noirs is the most guilty of perverting the course of critical and historical justice. The "structural" similarities between *New Jack City* or *Juice* and film noir escape me, and if *Juice* is "a masterpiece of black realism as film noir", then I'm Sydney Greenstreet.

Some new light is cast by Fredric Jameson, who attributes the genre's reliance on voice-over to the impact of radio on both hardboiled fiction and the films that followed. Joan Copjec, in one of the most theoretically dense chapters, explains: "Speech, as we know – language – is the death of the

thing, it contributes to the drying up of *jouissance*. And nothing has seemed more obvious in the criticism of film noir than this association of death with speech, for the voice-over is regularly attached to the dead narrator, whether literally, as in *Sunset Boulevard* and *Laura*, metaphorically, as in *Detour*, or virtually, as in *Double Indemnity*." As this passage demonstrates, critical writing about noir is no less haunted by the past than cinema itself. Indeed, Copjec's collection rounds up the usual suspects – Barthes, Lacan, Foucault – as well as adding Kant and Descartes to the line-up. As witnesses to noir, their testimonies are not entirely reliable – though perhaps that is only appropriate. Lacan, for instance, is cited as distinguishing between classical detective stories and their hardboiled variant: "In the former the detective accepts money for his services while in the latter he does not." One only has to reverse this formulation for it to be true.

The unreliable narrator and the duplicitous *femme fatale* have contributed to noir's reputation as the duplicitous genre. Joan Copjec argues, however, that "The noir universe has been perceived as essentially deceptive, though it is, in fact, a world in which nothing can lie hidden, everything must come to light. This is really the dark truth of film noir." Much of the writing in this volume, shadowed as it is by psychoanalytic/ideological film theory, appears vulnerable to the passage of time. Nevertheless, contributions from Fred Pfeil and Jameson, among others, do begin to explain why noir has outlived so many of its critical assassins and generic competitors. One reason offered by Pfeil is the genre's "categorical instability", the essential difference and difficulty which still prompt – and promptly problematise – new work on genre, authorship, industry and the so-called classical Hollywood text.

REVIEWS

Reviews, synopses and full credits for all the month's new films and selected re-releases

And the Band Played On

USA 1993

Director: Roger Spottiswoode

Certificate
12
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ITC
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HBO Pictures
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Aaron Spelling
E. Duke Vincent
Producers
Midge Sanford
Sarah Pillsbury
Co-producers
Arnold Schulman
Edward Teets
Line Producer
San Francisco:
Karen J. McCabe
Associate Producers
Marcia Basicis
Omneya "Nini" Mazen
Albert Shapiro
Production Co-ordinators
Patt McCurdy
San Francisco:
Maxine Garcia
Production Manager
Jeff Downer
Location Managers
Lauren Ross
San Francisco:
Gail Stempler
Casting
Judith Holstra
Nikki Valko
Associates:
Jill Anthony
Bill Dance
Voice:
Barbara Harris
Assistant Directors
Albert Shapiro
Albert Cho
San Francisco:
Toby Lavallo
Screenplay
Arnold Schulman
Based on the book
by Randy Shilts
Directors of Photography
Paul Elliott
San Francisco:
Paul Ryan
In colour
Camera Operator
Chris Squires
Video Playback
Inter Video:
Steve Austin
Editors
Lois Freeman-Fox
Editorial Consulting:
Bill Couturie
Additional:
Gary Weimberg
Garth Craven
Brent White
Video Montage Editor
Cynthia Fitzpatrick
Production Designer
Victoria Paul
Art Directors
Lee Mayman
San Francisco:
Kris Boxell
Art Department
Co-ordinator
Wendy Smith
Set Design
Maya Shimoguchi
Set Decorator
Diana Allen Williams
On Set Dresser
Pat Morache
Music
Carter Burwell
Music Editor
Adam Milo Smalley
Songs
"The Last Song" by
Elton John, Bernie
Taupin, performed
by Elton John;

"Manhattan Man"
by and performed
by Michael Urbaniak;
"Jumper's Way" by and
performed by David I.
Catney; "Play the
Game" by Freddie
Mercury, performed
by Queen
Choreography
Sarah Elgart
Costume Design
Patti Callicott
Wardrobe Supervisor
Sharon Rosenberg
Make-up Artists
Key:
Alan Apone
Additional:
Michael Spatola
Hair
Arturo Rojas
Additional:
Martin Christopher
Title Design
Robert Dawson
Titles/Opticals
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Peter Austin
David Hankins
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Chris Jenkins
Mark Smith
Brad Sherman
Sound Effects
Todd-AO/Glen
Glenn Studios
Special Consulting
Richard Rothenstein
Medical Adviser
Donna Cline
Historical Montage
Consultant
Chuck Workman
Film Extracts
The Second Epidemic
(1989)
Midnight Express (1978)

Cast
Matthew Modine
Dr Don Francis
Alan Alda
Dr Robert Gallo
Patrick Bauchau
Dr Luc Montagnier
Nathalie Baye
Dr Françoise Barre
Christian Clemenson
Dr Dale Lawrence
David Clennon
Mr Johnstone
Phil Collins
Eddie Papasano
Bud Cort
Antique Shop Owner
Alex Courtney
Dr Mika Popovic
David Duker
Dr Mervyn Silverman
Richard Gere
Choreographer

David Marshall Grant
Dennis Seeley
Ronald Guttman
Dr Jean-Claude
Chermann
Glenn Headly
Mary Guinan
Anjelica Huston
Dr Betsy Reisz
Ken Jenkins
Dr Dennis Donahue
Richard Jenkins
Dr Marc Conant
Tcheky Karyo
Dr Willy Rozenbaum
Swoosie Kurtz
Mrs Johnstone
Jack Lauffer
Brian McDonough
Donal Logue
Bobbi Campbell
Howie Mandel
Staff Doctor
Steve Martin
Brother
Richard Masur
William W. Darrow
Dakin Matthews
Congressman
Phil Burton
Ian McKellen
Bill Kraus
Peter McRobbie
Dr Max Essex
Lawrence Monoson
Chip
Jeffrey Nordling
Gaetan Dugas
Saul Rubinek
Dr Jim Curran
Charles Martin Smith
Dr Harold Jaffe
Lily Tomlin
Dr Selma Dritz
Stephen Spinella
Brandy Alexander
B.D. Wong
Kico Govantes
Walter Addison
Rene Levant
Thomas Kopache
Clyde Kusatsu
Rosemary Murphy
Blood Bank Executives
Jill Andre
Red Cross
Spokesperson
Alan Barry
Haemophiliac Patient
Neal Ben-Ari
Dr Tom Spira
David Bottrell
Third Man
Rico Bueno
Bellevue Hospital
Patient
Bill Carmichael
Delivery Man
Christopher Carroll
Dr Aaron Kellner
Reg E. Cathey
Staff Doctor #2
John Del Regno
Man in Grand Central
John Durbin
Sixth Man
Mogens Eckert
Chief Executive
(Copenhagen)
Carey Eidel
Tennis Player
Robert Briscoe Evans
Second Reporter
Richard Fancy
Dr Michael Gottlieb

Keythe Farley
Lab Technician
Christopher John Fields
Lawyer
Dave Florek
Doughnut Shop
Counterman
Niki Gilbert
Sudanese Girl
Yasmine Golchan
Dr Françoise
Bron-Vezlnet
Patrick Gorman
Charles Dauget
James Greene
Dr Alvin
Friedman-Kien
Jeffrey Hayenga
Dr Bruce Voeller
Daniel Henning
Blaine
Ike Ikediashi
Sudanese Boy
Laura Innes
Haemophiliac
Representative
Laura James
Margaret Heckler
Michael Kearns
Clare
Erasor Kemie
Sudanese Student
Jack Kenny
San Francisco Activist
Frank L'Bay
Desk Clerk
Rob LaBelle
Gay Rights Activist
Neal Lerner
First Man
Geoffrey Lower
Dr David Simpson
Anthony Lucero
Mailroom Man
James Mastrantonio
Eighth Man
Jon Matthews
Greg
Edafe Okurume
Sudanese Driver
Susanne Olsen
Intern (Copenhagen)
Angela Paton
Woman in Denver
Sierra Pecheur
Female Reporter
Miguel Perez
Reporter
Martin Raymond
Fourth Man
Jeremy Regan
Ticket Seller
Robert Martin Robinson
Chief Administrator
(France)
Valeri Ross
Jim's Secretary
Hildur Ruriks
Female Danish Second
Representative
Tom Schanley
Waiter
Sean Whitesell
Country Club
Attendant
Michael Winters
Middle-Aged Man
William Wintersole
Dr Paul Fiorino
Lenny Wolpe
Dr Joseph Bove

12,677 feet
141 minutes

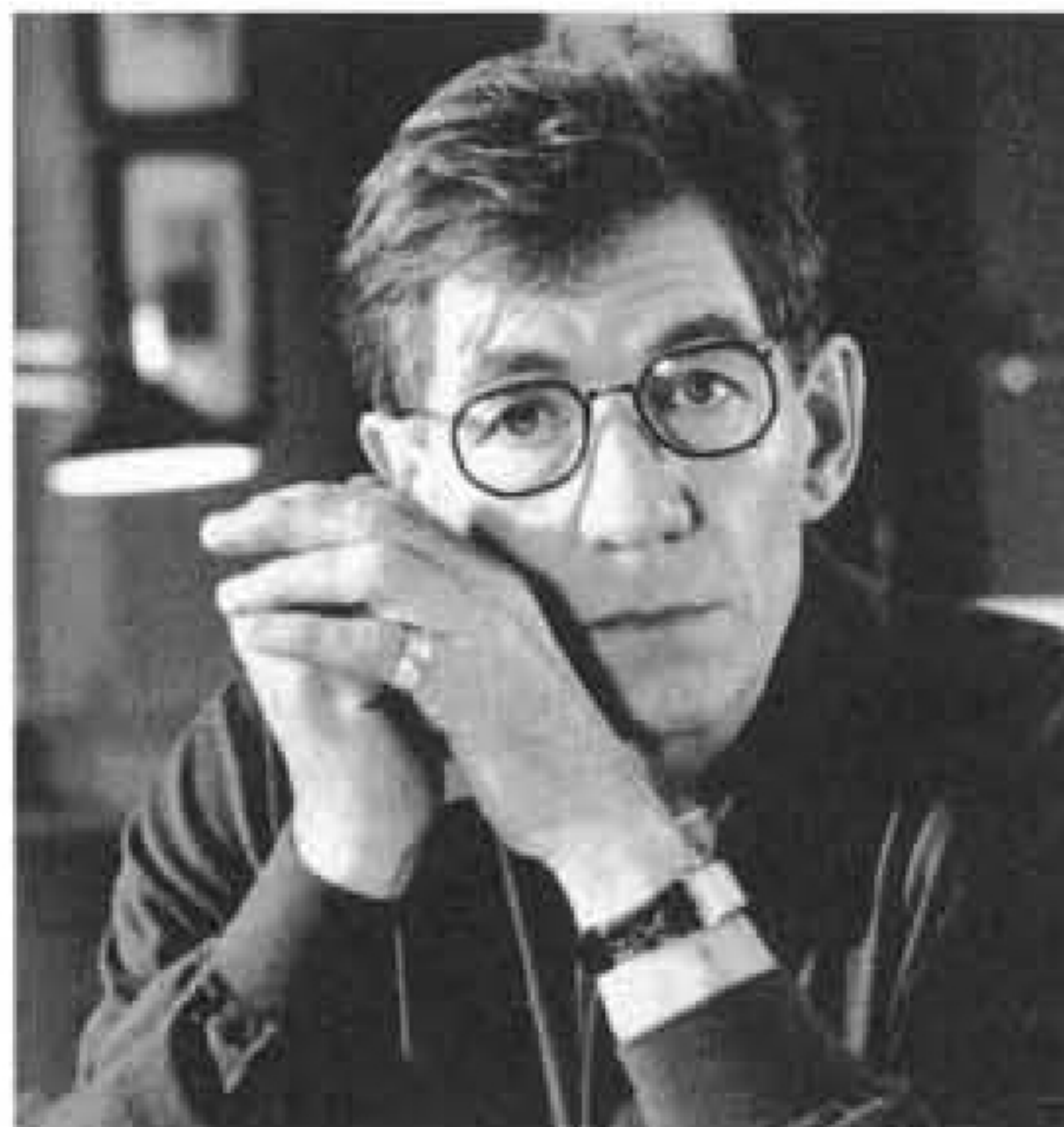
1976, Central Africa. Don Francis, a doctor with the World Health Organisation, arrives at a small village to find that the population has been decimated by disease – an outbreak of Ebola Fever. 1978, Paris. Doctors begin to notice a strange variety of illnesses affecting their gay male patients. 1980, Atlanta. Researchers at The Center for Disease Control, where Francis now works, file reports of a new disease hitting gay men in Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco. Gay community leader Bill Kraus attends a Democrat convention, and a flight attendant (who becomes known as 'Patient Zero'), informs his doctor that he has had about 250 sexual partners in the last year. 1981. The Center for Disease Control discovers that the disease is sexually transmitted, and probably viral. The campaign to close down the gay bath-houses begins. The disease is given a name, 'GRID' (Gay Related Immune Deficiency).

1982. Dr. Robert Gallo is credited with the discovery of the HTLV virus. Doctors go on the trail of Patient Zero. In Denver, a haemophiliac is diagnosed as having GRID. 1983. Clashes take place between gay activists and haemophiliacs, who want gay men prevented from donating blood. 'GRID' is changed to 'AIDS'. Doctors at the Pasteur Institute discover 'HIV'. 1984. Gallo and the French argue over who discovered the virus, before issuing a statement in which they share the responsibility. The HIV bloodtest is announced. Ronald Reagan is re-elected President.

1985. A candlelight march takes place in San Francisco. Francis visits Kraus, who is in the advanced stages of illness. Kraus tells him he is less afraid of dying than he is for what happens to the people left behind. A series of captions tell us that the bath-houses were shut down in 1985 that Francis resigned in 1992 and that Gallo was found guilty of unethical behaviour. As the credits roll, the screen is filled with photographs of Rock Hudson, Freddie Mercury and various panels from the AIDS Memorial Quilt.

By the time Ronald Reagan finally got around to uttering the word 'AIDS' in 1987, 25,000 Americans had already died. Published later that same year, the late Randy Shilts' best-selling AIDS tome *And The Band Played On* chronicles the early years of the epidemic, taking the Reagan administration to task for its appalling neglect of what was to become a national, then a world crisis.

There is something faintly opportunistic in the way that this weak dramatisation of Shilts' book – originally made for American television – has been rushed out for a British theatrical release hot on the heels of *Philadelphia*. One assumes that the version we are invited to see has been substantially cut down to size (how else do we account for all the holes in the plot?). Still, at two and a half hours it is at risk of being dubbed '*And The Band Played On, And On, And On...*'. The main problem is its lack of focus. This is the



Blood lines: Ian McKellen

story of a group of researchers led by Don Francis, who bravely battle against a corrupt officialdom which puts profits and political expediency before the interests of public health. It is also the story of the race between American and French scientists to identify the virus and thereby guarantee their place in the history books. And it is the story of ‘Patient Zero’, the promiscuous gay flight attendant singled out (somewhat controversially) by Shilts as the man who brought AIDS to America.

Added to this are all manner of subplots: the clashes between ‘responsible’ gay community leaders such as Bill Kraus and the defenders of gay bath-house culture; the refusal of the blood banks to screen blood or trace donors; the reluctance of the media to take interest in a disease perceived to affect only those people the public generally doesn’t like to read about. It is hardly surprising that, with so much going on at once, we never get the chance to develop anything more than a passing relationship with the key players. It isn’t really Ian McKellen’s fault that his big death-bed scene leaves us entirely cold. This is a film of many parts, in which none of the parts are given the opportunity to add up to very much.

The viewer’s struggle to find some point of identification is compounded by the fact that the film wears its stars in much the same way as one suspects the majority of stars don red ribbons. Actors appear to have been cast, not for their suitability for the role, but simply so that they could lend the weight of their celebrity to the project. Richard Gere, whose support in getting the film off the ground was considerable, pops up once or twice without really saying very much. Steve Martin makes a meal of his three minutes as the bereaved brother of a dancer who spent his life (and death) in the closet. Anjelica Huston drifts by looking as if she doesn’t quite know who or where she is supposed to be. And when Phil Collins tries to pass as the owner of a gay bath-house, the only conclusion you can possibly draw is that the casting director missed again. Likewise the script editor. There are moments here that would make the writers of *Neighbours* cringe – Don Francis’ all-too-regular flashbacks to his experience in Africa, for example, or the scene where an AIDS patient handling a Rubik Cube asks, “Why do they make things like this, that nobody can solve?”

As a lesson in the political history of the epidemic, *And the Band Played On* is too muddled to be in any way instructive. As a TV movie with big ambitions, it fails to make the least bit of drama out of a crisis rich in dramatic potential – a fact which the emotive use of archive footage during the closing credits seems to acknowledge. The most risible thing about it is that, inadvertently or not, the film mirrors the very mismanagement it sets out to criticize. By neglecting to remind us that this is an epidemic affecting people as well as share profits, it hardly encourages us to care.

Paul Burston

Backbeat			
United Kingdom 1993			
Director: Iain Softley			
Certificate	15	Additional Musicians	Eric Reed
Distributor	Rank		Terence Blanchard
Production Companies	PolyGram Filmed Entertainment		Buster Marbury
	Scala productions		David McMurray
	In association with Channel Four Films		Don Was
	Royal Film		Luis Conte
Executive Producers	Nik Powell		Mark Goldenberg
	Royal Film:		Jamie Muhoberac
	Hanno Huth		Billy Preston
Producers	Finola Dwyer		Jimmie Wood
	Stephen Woolley		Paulinho Da Costa
Co-producers	Sarah Curtis		String Orchestrations
	Stephen M. Williams		David Campbell
Line Producer	Paul Cowan		Music Producer
	Production Supervisor		Don Was
	Nicola Tyszkiewicz		Music Supervisor
Production Co-ordinator	Fran Triefus		Bob Last
Production Manager	Sarah Lucraft		Music Tutor
Location Managers	Chris Wheeldon		Malcolm Ross
	London:		Songs
	Ben Rimmer		“Good Golly Miss Molly” by Robert
	Liverpool:		Blackwell, John
	Jeff Bowan		Marascalco, “Carol”.
	Hamburg:		“Rock and Roll Music”
	Cristoph Schubenz		by Chuck Berry,
Casting	John Hubbard		“I Remember You” by
	Ros Hubbard		Johnny Mercer, Victor
	Diane Crittenden		Schertzinger, “Twenty
	Hamburg:		Flight Rock” by Ned
	Vicky Hinrichs		Fairchild, Eddie
Assistant Directors	Mary Soan		Cochran, “Long Tall
	Cliff Lanning		Sally” by Richard
	Josh Robertson		Penniman, Enotris
	Hamburg:		Johnson, Robert
	Paul Gray		Blackwell, “Road
Screenplay	Iain Softley		Runner” by Ellis
	Michael Thomas		McDaniel, “Love Me
	Stephen Ward		Tender” by Elvis
Director of Photography	Ian Wilson		Presley, Vera Matson,
	Panavision		“My Bonnie” (trad.),
Colour	Eastman Colour		“Money (That’s What
	Ian Wilson		I Want)” by Berry
Camera Operators	2nd:		Gordy, Janine Bradford,
	Alan Almond		“Slow Down” by Larry
Graphic Designer	Frances Bennett		Williams, “Please
Editor	Martin Walsh		Mr Postman” by Brian
	Joseph Bennett		Holland, Robert
Art Directors	Michael Carlin		Bateman, Freddie
	Hamburg:		Gorman, Georgia
	Joseph Plagge		Dobbins, William
Scenic Artists	Andrew Garnett		Garrett, “Twist and
	Lawson		Shout” by Bert Russell,
	Annie Lapaz		Phil Medley, performed
Painting Instructor	Matthew Amos		by the Backbeat Band;
Astrid’s Photos	Mark Tillie		“Kiss Me Honey Honey”
Music	Don Was		by Albon Timothy,
	Songs Performed by		Michael Julien,
	The Backbeat Band:		performed by Marcelle
	Vocals:		Duprey; “Chocolate
	Greg Dulli		Drop” by Chester
	Dave Pirner		Burnett, performed by
	Guitar, vocals:		Howling Wolf; “C’était
	Don Fleming		un jour de fête” by
	Guitar:		Monnot, Edith Piaf,
	Thurston Moore		performed by Edith
	Drums:		Piaf; “Bright Lights Big
	Dave Grohl		City” by and performed
	Bass:		by Jimmy Reed
	Mike Mills		Costume Design
			Sheena Napier
			Wardrobe Supervisor
			Annie Crawford
			Chief Make-up Artist
			Pat Hay
			Chief Hairstylist
			Stephen Rose
			Titles/Opticals
			Ray Short
			Capital FX
			Supervising Sound Editor
			Glenn Freemantle
			Dialogue Editor
			Nick Lowe
			ADREditor
			Peter Elliott
			Foley Editor
			Steve Spencer
			Sound Recordists
			Chris Munro
			Music:
			Rik Pekkonen
			Dolby stereo
			Sound Re-recorderist
			Robin O’Donoghue

Fight Arranger

Bill Weston
Sailor Stunts
Steven Street
Mark Newman

Film Extract

Les Enfants terribles
(1949)

Cast

Sheryl Lee
Astrid Kirchherr
Stephen Dorff
Stuart Sutcliffe
Ian Hart
John Lennon
Gary Bakewell
Paul McCartney
Chris O’Neill
George Harrison
Scot Williams
Pete Best
Kai Wiesinger
Klaus Voormann
Jennifer Ehle
Cynthia Powell
Marcelle Duprey
Singer
John White
Bernard Merrick
Nicholas Tennant
Sailors
Finola Geraghty
Model
Rob Spendlove
Arthur Ballard

Charlie Caine

Lord Woodbine
Freida Kelly
Mrs Harrison
Paul Humpoletz
Bruno
Christiana Uriarte
Abigail Wrapson
Galit Hershkovitz
Groupies
Gertan Klauber
Pimp
Stephen Grothgar
Barman
Lynn Lowton
Hooker
Manuel Harlan
Johannes
Britta Gartner
Dirk Winkler
Exis
Wolf Kahler
Bert Kaempfert
James Doherty
Tony Sheridan
Paul Duckworth
Ringo
Joerg Stabler
Policeman
Alexei Jawdokimov
Napoleon
Albert Welling
Doctor

8,998 feet
100 minutes

Liverpool, 1960. Art school friends John Lennon and Stuart Sutcliffe fail to escape from a group of men they have insulted in a club; Sutcliffe is beaten, receiving a heavy blow to the head. Soon afterwards, despite Sutcliffe’s misgivings about abandoning his painting, the two leave for Hamburg where their band, the Beatles, is booked to play. There, performing nightly, the Beatles begin to gain a following, and Sutcliffe and Lennon take to the life of drink, drugs and easy sex. They also meet Klaus Voormann, a local artist, and his girlfriend, photographer Astrid Kirchherr, who invite the Beatles to the Bar Enfer, home to Hamburg’s Existentialist scene. Lennon, who has noticed that Kirchherr and Sutcliffe are drawn to each other, explodes, dismissing the Enfer crowd as hypocrites. However, Kirchherr persuades him and the rest of the band to let her photograph them.

Sutcliffe begins to court Kirchherr. At one show he takes the microphone and sings to her, abysmally. A record company scout in the audience is frightened away, causing band member Paul McCartney, seeing an opportunity lost, to attack Sutcliffe as a liability and a mediocre musician who is carried by the rest of the band; Lennon defends his friend. Sutcliffe overhears the argument and leaves the club for Astrid’s home. On the way, his thoughts become scrambled, the first signs of the brain haemorrhage that will kill him. He misses a show and the band’s first recording session to be with Astrid, confiding in her that he is anxious to start painting again. The two sleep together, Kirchherr leaves Voormann and Sutcliffe moves in with her.

The Beatles’ success is checked by a forced return to Liverpool when George Harrison is discovered to be too young to work legally, but they go back to Hamburg straight after Harrison’s eighteenth birthday. Sutcliffe now spends most of his time with Astrid

and is painting feverishly. A fight with Lennon over his commitment signals his break from the band and he is delighted to win a place in Hamburg art school, although his health is still a concern after he suffers a blackout. When the Beatles return to England, Sutcliffe stays behind, and becomes engaged to Kirchherr, but not before his instability is emphasised by a violent, unprovoked attack on Voormann. He continues to paint with a passion, hearing of the Beatles’ growing reputation, until he is seized by a convulsion and dies. April 1962. The Beatles are due to return to Hamburg to play. Kirchherr tells Lennon of Sutcliffe’s death, and later watches their performance at the Star Club.

The recent slice of history on which *Backbeat*’s script is based might have been invented by Steve Woolley and Nik Powell as exemplary raw material for a British feature. The first film from the pair’s Scala production company, it tells a British story which boasts British characters as loud and ambitious as young Americans. What’s more, among its principals are the Beatles, peerless exponents in music of what Woolley and Powell have repeatedly trumpeted as their design in film: pop art.

As with Woolley and Powell’s Palace productions, the film has been thought through as a clever package. The mostly British cast is led by two American semi-stars, which should help it travel, while the songs were recorded for the film’s soundtrack by a band of left-field pop luminaries, which should stir the interests of young music fans. Both decisions are fine: the Americans, Dorff and Lee, do all that is required of them, while the film only benefits from the super-band’s take on the punky, pre-fame Beatles.

However, making a script from a package is a trickier feat, resulting, as occasionally happens here, in events and behaviour which jar as crudely emblematic. “It’s all about the origins of Pop Art,” first-time director Iain Softley has said of *Backbeat*. Raw English musicians, imbued with America, meet and are influenced by German aesthetes. Identifying the different currents at work are some pretty predictable markers. For bedtime reading to Sutcliffe, Kirchherr chooses Rimbaud, confirming the belief that it is only characters in films or plays – those the writers need to flag as arty – who still read Rimbaud.

Yet the film’s strengths are also the product of its broad strokes. The rock ‘n’ roll life is rendered in a knockabout cartoon fashion. In an image that flirts, as the film half-heartedly does, with Lennon’s possible bisexuality, Lennon, having sex with a groupie on his lower bunk bed, calls up to Sutcliffe, entangled with another groupie on the upper bunk, and asks, “Are you glad you came?” They sustain their antics by popping pills, and play on a Reeperbahn whose seediness has been treated to a saucy postcard makeover, more ►

◄ slap-and-tickle than sordid. More vivid still are the costumes, haunts and posturing of Astrid’s crowd who really did call themselves, it seems, the Existentialists. *Backbeat*’s design team evidently enjoyed turning them into bohemians as styled by Tony Hancock.

Fleshing out this engaging cartoon is an excellent performance by Ian Hart as Lennon (his second stab at him, the first being in Christopher Münch’s *The Hours And Times*). Hart sometimes seems to be working from his own script, so favoured is he with the best lines. This is Lennon as the clever anti-intellectual, the champion of rude, low art. Van Gogh, he tells Sutcliffe, would be in a blues band if he were alive in the 60s (could the scriptwriters not have thought of a painter with two good ears?). His routine response when faced with what he views as the pretensions of Astrid’s crowd is, “It’s all dick.” Hart’s portrayal suggests vulnerability behind the swagger and acclaims nervy wit as a creative defense mechanism.

Of course, the film’s focus is meant to be on Sutcliffe. But the character does not really hang together, riven as it is by the types it is asked to play. He is both cool rocker (he is rock ‘n’ roll attitude, cries Lennon) and fevered artist; beautiful object (on stage he is almost motionless, a statue in dark glasses) turned into driven subject. Sutcliffe threatens to stand exposed as a mere peg to hang the film on. Alternatively – to credit the film with more subtlety than it perhaps deserves – we may prefer to view Sutcliffe as a character trying to assemble himself. He has a go at being James Dean, plays at *Cabaret* and finally attempts garret power-painting. *Backbeat* is certainly effective – mostly because of Hart – as a picture of young men learning, and learning how to bluff. Research carried out for the film suggests that the ‘real’ Sutcliffe was chancing his arm as preposterously as the standard over-reaching 20-year-old: “I have shrivelled like a sucked grape,” and “In a piss-pot sits my soul,” he wrote in letters from Hamburg.

Tempting as it might be to forget all references to ‘real’ people, *Backbeat* will be scrutinised for its spin on the Beatles story. However, Lennon apart, there’s only a sketchy, mean-spirited McCartney to step out of the shadows and trouble Mop-top spotters (although period detail fiends will gasp at the glaring anachronism of the huge “Welcome to Merseyside” sign at Liverpool Airport – the metropolitan council was not established until 1974). The film does, though, have an angle on the Beatles story, which is to underline the lessons learned in Hamburg from Kirchherr and Voormann (who later designed the *Revolver* album sleeve) on the value of projecting an image, which these days is a new band’s first lesson. However, *Backbeat* does not encourage the viewer to sympathise with the Hamburg sophisticates – probably because it is most at ease as a restive pop romp – and invites us instead to echo Lennon, and cry out, “It’s all dick.”

Robert Yates

The Ballad of Little Jo

USA 1993

Director: Maggie Greenwald

Certificate 15	Foley Artists Nancy Cabrera Elisha Birnbaum
Distributor Rank	Stunt Co-ordinator Buddy Joe Hooker
Production Company Fine Line Features	Stunts David Burton James Halty Shawn Howell Danny Rogers
PolyGram Filmed Entertainment	Stunt Doubles Suzy Amis: Marguerite Happy
A Joco production	Bo Hopkins: John White
Executive Producers Ira Deutchman John Sloss	Wranglers Josh Hedrick Guy Small Walter Secrest
Producers Fred Berner Brenda Goodman	Cast
Associate Producer Anne Dillon	Suzy Amis Jo Monaghan
Production Co-ordinator Livia Perez-Borrero	Bo Hopkins Frank Badger
Production Manager Alysse Bezahler	Ian McKellen Percy Corcoran
Casting Judy Claman Jeffrey Passero	David Chung Tinman Wong
Assistant Directors Lisa Zimble Cas Donovan Amy Schmidt	Carrie Snodgress Ruth Badger
Screenplay Maggie Greenwald	Rene Auberjonois Streight Hollander
Director of Photography Declan Quinn	Heather Graham Mary Addie
Panavision	Sam Robards Jasper Hill
Colour Technicolor	Tom Bower Lyle
2nd Unit Director of Photography Mitchell Amundsen	Ruth Maleczech Shopkeeper
2nd Unit Camera Operator Stephen Slocomb	Olinda Turturro Elvira
2nd Unit Steadicam Operator Kyle Rudolph	Irina Pasmur Russian Mother
Editor Keith Reamer	Anthony Heald Henry Grey
Production Designer Mark Friedberg	Melissa Leo Mrs Grey
Art Director Ginger Toupas	Sean Murphy Young Henry Grey
Art Department Co-ordinator Hannah Wittich	Jeffrey Andrews Sam
Set Decorator Stephanie Carroll	Cathy Haase Mrs Addie
Set Dressers James Dungan Elizabeth (Betsy) Alton Chad Branham	Peadair S. Addie Snr Mr Addie
Special Effects J.C. Brotherhood	Jenny Lynch Helen Monaghan
Music/Performed by David Mansfield	Vince O'Neil Amos Monaghan
Music Editor James Flatto	Karen Johnson Farmwife
Song “Ballad For Little Jo” by David Mansfield, performed by Nan O’Byrne	Troy Smith Keith Kamppinen
Choreography/Movement Coach JoAnn Fregalette Jansen	Rusty Pegar Duke Billy
Costume Design Claudia Brown	Robert Erickson Wilkins
Wardrobe Supervisor Cheryl Kilbourne- Kimpton	Michael Ruud Russian Father
Make-up Lori Hicks	David Ruben Plowman Nick, age 9
Hair stylist Nancy Tong	Sasha Pasmur Nick, age 14
Titles/Opticals Reel Effects	Dennis McNiven Mortician
Supervising Sound Editor Wendy Hedin	Barbara Jean Marsh Laundress
Sound Editor Stuart Emanuel	Robert Erickson Wilkins
ADR Editor Michael Jacobi	Jaime Crabtree Jo’s Baby
Sound Recordist Felipe Borrero	Tracy Mayfield John
Dolby stereo	Julianne Kirst Nora Monaghan
Sound Re-recordist Rick Dior	Deborah J. Richard Mabel
	Netha Goodrich Lucy
	Becca Busch Little Sue

Jim Dunkin Mr Brown	Melissa Ladvala Older Russian Girl
Homer Simon Fiddler	Yevgeniy Yasyriu Russian Father
Eryn L. Bent Russian Girl	Duane Ebel Nick, age 40
Peter Plowman Young Russian Boy	10,902 feet 121 minutes
Joe Freed Older Russian Boy	
Anne Plowman Young Russian Girl	

1866. Josephine Monaghan, a young woman from a well-off New York family, has been thrown out by her father after becoming pregnant by a photographer; her baby son is in the care of her sister Helen. Josephine accepts a lift from a pedlar heading West, but two soldiers shoot him dead and drag her away. Escaping, she tries to replace her torn frock, but the shop she finds only has fabric and thread. Instead she buys men’s clothes, cuts off her hair, carves a scar into her cheek and becomes ‘Little Jo’. She rides into Ruby City, a remote mining outpost, where she passes as a man.

Percy Corcoran, the mine superintendent, suggests work at the stables, and offers a room in his shack. She accepts, but puzzles him by keeping her distance. On a night when the men take turns with a visiting prostitute, Jo is called to intervene when Percy attacks the woman. Terrified of Percy learning her true sex, Jo asks sheep-rancher Frank Badger to hire her as his winter herder. Jo soon learns to shoot predators and comes to love the peace and privacy of life in the wilderness. On her return to town, Percy hands her a letter from Helen. Having read it and learned that Jo is a woman, he tries to rape her, but she holds him off at gun-point. Percy agrees to leave but black-mails Jo into financing his move.

Now a rancher, Jo prevents a crowd, led by Frank, from lynching a Chinese man seeking work. Frank agrees to set ‘Tinman Wong’ free only if Jo will hire him as a cook. Accepting resentfully, she treats Tinman badly, making him sleep outdoors. Eventually she relents and helps him build a shelter; he reveals that he knows she is a woman, and they become lovers.

Frank warns Jo that the Western Cattle Company, who have been buying up small ranches in the area, are using

violence, but Jo won’t sell. When Jo finds a Russian refugee family lying slaughtered by Cattle Company horsemen, she throws Tinman out. He re-enters to find Jo wearing a dress. She says she will sell. Tinman becomes ill. About to sign over the ranch to the Cattle Company’s owner, Henry Grey, she changes her mind when she sees Tinman has recovered. On the day when Frank is standing for Mayor, three Company horsemen lie in wait for Jo and Frank, but they shoot all three dead. The elections proceed and the Company’s tactics are defeated.

Years later, after Tinman’s death, Frank finds Jo dead in bed. Preparing for a grand funeral, the undertaker undresses the corpse and learns the truth about Jo, and the townsfolk gather round in amazement. Frank finds Jo’s family portrait and Helen’s letters, and her story is made public.

In her recent book *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns*, Jane Tompkins argues that the Western arose as a male reaction to the nineteenth century novel – it represents the enclosure of a strictly men-only territory, defined by its exclusion of the spheres of civilisation, domesticity and language which the novel had mapped out as female. In that light, it is no surprise that Maggie Greenwald’s much-touted ‘woman’s Western’ should be so preoccupied with women’s lack of freedom to storm the West themselves.

Although based on the life of a real Josephine Monaghan, who lived undetected as a ‘man’ until her death, Greenwald’s second appropriation of a male genre (following her adaptation of Jim Thompson’s *The Kill-Off*) is organised around the impossibility of being a lone woman in the West. The emphasis is more on oppression than transgression, on showing us the brutal, misogynist, racist reality of the bad old West rather than reimagining it as an all-cowgirl heaven.

For some, *The Ballad of Little Jo* will look like the straightest cross-dressing movie ever made – Jo even tries to buy frocks before settling on trousers and shirts, ex-model Amis is more gamine than butch, and the lesbian potential of the Ruby City women’s affection for the gentle loner is passed by. For oth-



Even cowgirls get the blues: Suzy Amis

ers, it may not even qualify as a Western: it's short on shoot-outs, and a sheep-rancher isn't quite a cowgirl.

Within its chosen brief, though, *The Ballad of Little Jo* is an exemplary and often starkly beautiful tale – a mix of adventure and romance which succeeds in reinstating female experience into a genre which has by definition sidelined it. One nice touch is that Jo's empathy for and solidarity with other women are crucial to her success as a woman and as a 'man': her near-unique 'male' civility among the universal misogynist violence and abuse in Ruby City eventually wins her the respect of men as well as women.

Even male misreadings of Jo's actions – notably her insistence on keeping male camaraderie at bay – have the effect of confirming her 'maleness'. Before his taste for sexual violence is out in the open, Percy is happy to suggest to Jo that prostitutes are "cheaper and less trouble" than taking a wife. When Jo tells him she won't be courting Mary, a young woman who seems particularly fond of her, he takes this to mean that she too is a woman-hater.

The West's irrational prejudices against any form of difference are sent up more overtly when Jo first enters Ruby City's saloon. Hostile gamblers are quick to accuse the newcomer of being a 'dude', but Jo demonstrates that 'he' is not wearing the loud stockings dudes apparently favour. When Jo ripostes that dudes "have as much right to be here as anybody", it is clear that all exclusions of otherness are being questioned, not merely the exclusion of women. It is no surprise, then, that the relationship between the white male West's sexual and racial outsiders – Jo and Tinman – proves to be the film's most intriguing element.

Most crucially, the shifting balance of power between the pair raises provocative questions about the political implications of Jo's gender-swap masquerade. She plays the imperious white male to the hilt; he gets the raw-deal role of housewife-cum-slave. While this role reversal has its amusing side – the joke is on Jo when she complains that dinner isn't done, unaware that Tinman's stir-fry will be ready in seconds – the suggestion is that acting as a white male inevitably entails adopting white male racial and gender hierarchies too.

However, Greenwald rightly shifts the relationship onto a more egalitarian footing before the two can become lovers. The transgression of racial and gender boundaries is both moving and playful, and Amis and Chung's sinuously muscled bodies, her hair short and his long, look extraordinary together. But there is never any simplistic pretence that inequality has vanished. Tinman's 'female' domestic duties continue as before, and when Jo pines for her son, he replies briskly, "Yes, but you are a free white man now. And some day soon, you will even vote." *The Ballad of Little Jo* may not quite be a Western, but such moments of astuteness compensate for plenty.

Claire Monk

Beethoven's 2nd

USA 1993

Director: Rod Daniel

Certificate U	Mechanical Effects Supervisor Peter Knowlton
Distributor UIP	Puppeteers Mecki Heussen F. Charles Lutkus III Claire Manion David Nelson Timothy Ralston Shaun Smith Van Snowden Norman Tempia N. Brock Winkless IV
Production Company Universal Pictures	Music Randy Edelman
Executive Producer Ivan Reitman	Orchestrations Greig McRitchie Ralph Ferraro Mark McKenzie
Producers Michael C. Gross Joe Medjuck	Music Editor Kathy Durning
Co-producer Gordon Webb	Songs "The Day I Fall In Love" by Carole Bayer Sager, James Ingram, Clif Magness, performed by Dolly Parton, James Ingram; "Chains" by John Stevens, Karl Stephenson, performed by His Boy Elroy; "Jimmy Olsen's Blues" by and performed by Spin Doctors; "Do You Love Me" by Berry Gordy, performed by The Contours; "Roll Over Beethoven" by Chuck Berry, performed by Paul Shaffer, Will Lee, Sid McGinnis, Anton Fig
Associate Producer Sheldon Kahn	Costume Design April Ferry
Production Co-ordinator Lisa J. Watters	Costume Supervisors Paul H. Lopez 2nd Unit: David Ferry
Unit Production Manager Gordon Webb	Make-up Artists Ken Chase Jim Scribner
Location Manager Ira Stanley Rosenstein	Hair Susan V. Kalinowski Allen Payne 2nd Unit: Dorothy Byrne
2nd Unit Directors Daniel Goldberg David R. Ellis	Titles/Opticals Pacific Title
Casting Steven Jacobs Associates: Lia Abbate-Chang Phaedra Harris	Supervising Sound Editors Per Hallberg Larry Kemp
Assistant Directors J. Stephen Buck Cellin Gluck Lucille Ouyang 2nd Unit: Christopher T.Gerrity Ira Stanley Rosenstein Robert M. Webb Gary Schilz	Sound Editors Dan Hegeman Lou Kleinman Marshall Winn Bernard Weiser Dan Rich Jeff Watts Mark A. Lanza Craig Jaeger Trevor Jolly Scott Burrow Mark Gordon
Screenplay Len Blum	ADR Supervisor Dick Friedman
Director of Photography Bill Butler	ADR Editor Bill Voigtlander
Colour Deluxe	Production Sound Mixer Gene S. Cantamessa
2nd Unit Directors of Photography Michael A. Benson Earl L. Clark	Sound Recordists Rudy Lara Aaron Bryson Dolby stereo
Aerial Photography James Gavin	Sound Re-recordists Gary C. Bourgeois Brad Sherman
Camera Operators Michael Stone 2nd Unit: Joe Valentine Howard Ford	Foley Karin Roulo
Video Playback Paul Murphey 2nd Unit: Aaron Katz	Music: Dennis Sands
Visual Effects Buena Vista Visual Effects: Supervisor: Paul Lasaine Producer: Lynda Lemon Digital Supervisor: Craig Newman Stage and Plate Camera: David Hardberger Eric Peterson	Foley Artists Ellen Heuer Kevin Bartnoff
Editors Sheldon Kahn William D. Gordean	Stunt Co-ordinator Ronald Rondell
Production Designer Lawrence Miller	Stunts Ted Barba Lisa Biossat
Art Director Charles Breen	
Set Design Cosmas A. Demetriou Daniel Maltese	
Set Decorator Cloudia	
Set Dressers Gary Brewer Dale E. Anderson Lawrence C. Haney	
Production Illustrator George Denes Suhayda	
Special Effects Co-ordinator David M. Blitstein	
Additional Effects David L.Simmons Randy Cabral Jeff Frink	



Bowwowvows: a mutt and his mate

Janet Brady Heather Burton William H. Burton Wade Chapman Jim Conners John Cypert Steve Davison Richard Ellis Danny Epper Christian J. Fletcher Lauren Gibbs Nadine Grycan Jim Halty Tabby Hanson Roy Harrison CaitJames Donna Keegan Richard Larson Sarah Malone Fitzgerald Dan McCann Cole McLarty Julie Michaels Jimmy Roberts Erik Rondell Cecilia Santos Ken Seyler Spike Silver Frank Sparks Steve Upton Dan Weselis Scott Wilder	Nicholle Tom Ryce Christopher Castile Ted Sarah Rose Karr Emily DebiMazar Regina Chris Penn Floyd Ashley Hamilton Taylor Danny Masterson Seth CatherineReitman Janie Maury Chaykin Cliff Klamath Heather McComb Michelle Scott Waara Banker Jeff Corey Janitor Virginia Capers Chemistry Teacher Devon Gummersall Jason Perkins Baseball Captains Jordan Bond Newspaper Boy Robert Cavanaugh Randall Slavin Party Guys Dion Zamora Bully DamienRapp Todd Kolker Teen Hecklers Adena Bjork Heather Pat Jankiewicz Arthur Lewis Tom Dugan Hot Dog Vendor Holly Wortell Window Dresser Don Lake Window Display Manager Beethoven Beethoven 8,008 feet 89 minutes
Cast Charles Grodin George Newton Bonnie Hunt Alice Newton	

Family life with the Newtons is as ordinary as three kids, a St Bernard dog called Beethoven and a father in the air-freshener business would allow. It's spring and Beethoven, alongside the Newtons' teenage kids, Ryce and Ted, is looking for that very special companion. In the park, Beethoven sees a man, Cliff, feeding an ice-cream cone to Missy, a female St

Bernard who wears a pink ribbon; it is instant love. Gina, Cliff's ex-wife, who is holding his dog in order to extract extra alimony, collects Missy; Cliff has limited visiting rights. Beethoven follows Gina's car home; he and Missy have a touching balcony scene. As Gina and her new man, Floyd, anticipate the size of Cliff's cheque, Missy jumps over the balcony for a date with Beethoven.

Ten weeks later, Ryce is being courted by a boy at school, Taylor. Ted and his younger sister Emily follow Beethoven to the storage room of Gina's building, where they find Missy and four puppies. Gina arrives and drags Missy away; Ted, Emily and Beethoven return home and the puppies are hidden in their basement. The three children feed the puppies, keeping them secret from their father. George, stressed out and under-financed because of a new air-freshener flavour he is planning, discovers the puppies, and reluctantly agrees to keep them.

To celebrate the Fourth of July holiday, the Newtons borrow a cottage in the mountains. Gina and Floyd are staying nearby, as is Taylor. Seth, a local boy, takes Ryce to Taylor's cottage. She sees Taylor playing with other girls and retreats. The next night, Ryce passes Taylor's cottage. He is throwing a party; most of the teenage guests are drunk. She tethers Beethoven to a strut supporting the lake-side house. Taylor locks Ryce in his bedroom and attempts a seduction. Beethoven, goaded by louts pouring beer on his head, breaks his tether and pulls the strut away; Taylor and most of his bedroom fall into the lake.

The next day, the Newtons visit the local country fair. George and Beethoven win a burger-eating contest. Beethoven finds Missy locked in Gina's car. He helps her escape and together they run up the mountain. Gina and Floyd, alerted to the value of pedigree puppies, snatch the dogs from the children. When they discover Missy's ►

◀ escape, they set the puppies on the trail. Gina, Floyd, the Newtons and the puppies all run up the mountain. Floyd threatens to throw a puppy into the ravine far below if the Newtons refuse to hand over ownership of the puppies, but before he can act, the ground gives way. The puppy falls safely to earth as Floyd and Gina tumble into space, to be carried away by the fast-flowing river. Back home, Seth picks up Ryce on a first date and Cliff and Missy visit Beethoven and their ever-growing puppies.

● In a film so supportive of what Dame Edna Everage would call “niceness”, what could any moral fundamentalist have to say against *Beethoven’s 2nd*? This is a film where love equals marriage, where sex is about love, fidelity and devotion and happens off-screen. Bad sex – that is, Taylor and his slick chat-up lines – is spectacularly prevented. Beethoven and Missy may not get married as such, but they clearly have a surfeit of family values sloshing around their bloodstreams. Not only that – of all dogs in the park, Beethoven and Missy only have eyes for each other. If this film were really about forbidden love, there would at least be a hint of miscegenation around. If the film’s scriptwriters ever felt the urge to be transgressive, all they would need was a story line that involved Beethoven, a dachshund and a bath of custard.

But no – discord and disharmony are symbolised by Gina and Floyd. He is a slob, she has a Brooklyn accent, a red Mercedes and a wardrobe comprised of Miss Whiplash couture. They both hate nature (that is, the mountains) and they both hate dogs. The Newtons, encountered in the first *Beethoven* film, are a suburban version of the Waltons. Daddy strives to reproduce the smell of evergreen pine in his air-freshener; Mom bakes all day long; the kids are in school; Ryce is good at chemistry. Chaos has a limited definition which is usually linked to Beethoven’s typically doggy antics.

These provide an easy source of standard comic turns: Beethoven raiding the larder, going window-shopping with Missy, those little puppy puddles that keep appearing. Beyond this, the plot line is simplistic and its key lies in the film’s emphasis on relationships: dog to dog and human to human. This is a point of departure from the first film, where it seemed that the presence of a mad vet intent on giving the dog a lethal injection created a more interesting source of anxiety than Gina’s plans to sell the pups or even Ryce’s first boyfriend. Gum-snapping Gina, on the face of it, is a low-rent caricature of Cruella de Vil, the eminently more elegant villainess of *One Hundred and One Dalmatians*. But, with her vapid and self-obsessed life, she hardly measures up to the model provided by Dodie Smith’s book and its Disney adaptation, and neither do the Newtons. *Beethoven’s 2nd* has all the wit and spontaneity of a suet pudding.

Louise Gray

Belle Epoque

Spain 1992

Director: Fernando Trueba

Certificate

15

Distributor

Mayfair Entertainment

Production Companies

Fernando Trueba Film Production (Madrid) In collaboration with Lola Films (Barcelona)/Animatografo (Lisbon)/French Production (Paris) With the co-operation of Sogepaq/Eurimages

Executive Producer

Andrés Vicente Gómez

Line Producer

Cristina Huete

Production Managers

Angélica Huete
Fernando Vendrel

Co-production

Virginia Rubio

Co-ordinator

Fernando Centeio

Assistant Directors

Jaime Botella
Fernando Centeio

Screenplay

Rafael Azcona

Story

Rafael Azcona
José Luis García Sanchez
Fernando Trueba

Director of Photography

José Luis Alcaine

Cinemascope

Cinemascope

Colour

Eastman Color

Camera Operator

Juan Molina

Editor

Carmen Frías

Art Director

Juan Botella

Special Effects

Filipe Cardoso

Music

Antoine Duhamel

Music Co-ordinator

Miguel Sáez

Songs

“En Un Pais de Fabula” from “La Tabernera del Puerto” by Pablo Sorozabal, Guillermo Fernandez Shaw, Federico Romero, “Paloma” from “El Barberillo de Lavapiés” by Barbieri, performed by Mary Carmen Ramírez

Wardrobe

Lala Huete

Make-up Artist

Ana Lorena

Hairstylist

Ana Ferreira

Sound Recordist

Georges Prat

Music:

Enrique Rielo

Dolby stereo

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordist

Alfonso Pino

Cast

Fernando Fernán Gómez
Manolo
JorgeSanz
Fernando
Maribel Verdú
Rocío
Ariadna Gil
Violeta
Miriam Díaz-Aroca
Clara
Penélope Cruz
Luz
Gabino Diego
Juanito
Michel Galabru
Luz
Danglard
Agustín González
Don Luis
Chus Lampreave
DonaAsun
Mary Carmen Ramírez
Amalia
Juan José Otegui
Jesús Bonilla
Soldiers
María Galiana
Polonia
Félix Cubero
Palomo
Juan Potau
Paco
Marciano De La Fuente
The Mayor
José Antonio Sacristán
Rorro
Manuel Huete
Villager
Luis Zagalo
Cañán
Adelina Andrade
La Encarna
João Salaviza Silva
Jesusin
Bernardino Nascimento
François Venturini
Miguel Purrait
Joaquin Raposo
Luis Romero
José Graniza
Fernando Sequeira
Eduard Marques
Street Musicians

9,836 feet

109 minutes

Subtitles

● Spain, 1931. On the eve of the declaration of the Republic, Fernando, a young deserter from the King’s army in Madrid, is captured by two Civil Guards. When both of them are killed in a quarrel, the lucky Fernando takes refuge in a brothel. There he meets the elderly libertine and artist Manolo, who invites him back to his large country house in which he lives, separated from his wife. Fernando resolves to return to Madrid incognito, but remains in the village when he catches sight of Manolo’s four beautiful daughters as they arrive at the station: the recently widowed Clara, the masculine-identified Violeta, the seductive Rocío, engaged to a local Royalist, and the virginal Luz.

Fernando sleeps with three of them in turn. He is seduced by Violeta when both are cross-dressed at the local carnival; by Rocío when she seeks consolation after an argument with her fiancé; and by Clara, after she has pushed him into the lake where her husband drowned. Meanwhile, Manolo’s wife Amalia, an aging diva of the Spanish operetta, pays an unexpected visit to husband and daughters. The reunion is ecstatic, even though she brings her stage-manager/lover, who reveals that Amalia’s career is by no means as successful as she claims. After his amorous experiments, Fernando has finally come to believe that it is the youngest daughter, Luz, who is his true love. They become engaged and Luz visits him in bed on the morning before their wedding. Finally, the three elder sisters leave the station for Madrid, while Fernando and Luz set out for a new life in America, leaving Manolo alone once more.

● In the prologue to *Belle Epoque*, the fortunate Fernando is let off scot free after the Civil Guards who arrest him as a deserter conveniently kill each other off. In the narrative of transparent wish-fulfilment which follows, director Fernando Trueba seems to be hoping that his audience will be similarly indulgent and will absolve him of the charges of aestheticism and sexism aroused by his film, with its period art design and its multiple seduction plot, with each daughter surrendering herself in turn to the puppy-eyed Jorge Sanz.

As the story develops, *Belle Epoque* nonetheless offers many pleasures. The picturesque decor (filmed in Portugal, not Spain) is beautifully shot by Almodóvar regular José Luis Alcaine, who manfully resists the temptation of soft focus, which ruined so many Spanish period films of the 80s; and the four young women offer splendidly assured performances. Miriam Diaz-Aroca essays a demure modesty far from the petulant sensuality she lent Almodóvar’s *High Heels*; Ariadna Gil does her best to stop Violeta turning into a straight fantasy of a lipstick lesbian; Maribel Verdú (from Vicente Aranda’s *Amantes* and currently Spain’s hottest young actress) brings intelligence to her customary passion; and Penelope Cruz (from Bigas Luna’s *Jamón, Jamón*) pouts prettily as the neglected virgin.

While it comes as no surprise to learn that this lazy plot was cooked up by Trueba and his male collaborators over a series of long lunches, the film’s heterosexual wish-fulfilment is partially mitigated by the fact that the passive male is invariably humiliated by the active females before they offer themselves to him. Fernando is pushed into a lake by Clara, and dressed as a maid for the carnival by Violeta, revealing in the process an unnerving likeness to Tony Curtis in *Some Like It Hot*. This episode, in which Gil, cross-dressed, straddles the nonplussed Sanz while quite literally blowing his trumpet, is perhaps the film’s most success-

The age of inoffensiveness: Cruz, Sanz

fully comic and erotic moment. One suspects, however, that the many awards garnered by Gil from the role derive from her perceived courage in Spain in playing a lesbian at all.

More pervasive problems crystallise around Fernando Fernán Gómez’s patriarch. The most ubiquitous actor in Spanish cinema, he has been perfecting his crusty old man act for at least 20 years. Here he replays it as an unlikely provincial libertine, freely accepting the lesbianism of one daughter and the lost virginity of the others. The problem is that – as with the film’s profane priest or its parodic treatment of political conservatives – *Belle Epoque*’s sunny good humour simply conjures away the real conflicts of Spanish history, encouraging the contemporary audience to adopt the comforting, ironic distance of its anachronistically permissive family.

While domestic audiences clearly appreciated the absence of that po-faced seriousness with which much state-sponsored cinema of the 80s addressed the Civil War (making this one of the biggest-grossing Spanish films of all time), *Belle Epoque*’s attitude to the past is one of anaesthetic amnesia. Where Merchant/Ivory’s films offer a gilded image of a British social order now definitively lost, Trueba’s equally aestheticized period piece holds up a mirror to that tolerant, and sometimes indifferent, libertarianism on which Spain came to pride itself after the death of Franco. At a time when that achievement is threatened by mass unemployment and the rise of the Right, the escapist attractions of such rewriting of Spanish history are all too obvious.

The film ends with a moment of closure and of evasion: Fernando marries the youngest daughter and emigrates with her to America. The chastening of Fernando echoes the domestication of Trueba and his collaborators: one would hardly guess that scriptwriter Rafael Azcona was responsible for some of the most grotesque and bizarre Spanish features of the Franco era, when he worked with directors such as Luis Berlanga and Marco Ferreri. The significance of the extraordinary popular and critical success of *Belle Epoque* is surely in its rejection of that vein of corrosive humour and perverse violence that was once so characteristic of Spanish film. It is Trueba’s achievement to have shown that a Spaniard can direct a period picture as polished and inoffensive as any in European art cinema.

Paul Julian Smith

38 | 4 SIGHT AND SOUND



Beltenebros (Prince of Shadows)

Spain 1991

Director: Pilar Miró

Certificate Not yet issued	Titles/Opticals Story Film: Pablo Nuñez
Distributor Metro Pictures	Sound Recordist Carlos Faruolo
Production Companies Iberoamericana Films (Madrid)/Floradora Distributors (Warsaw)	Dolby stereo
In co-operation with Televisión Española	Sound Re-recordists Manuel Cora Jnr
Producer Andrés Vicente Gómez	Alberto Herena
Production Supervisor José G. Jacoste	Sound Transfers Antonio Illan
Production Co-ordinators Begoña Pedrazas	Sound Effects Luis Castro
Poland: Maciej Skalski	Stunts Juan Majan
England: Gina Marsh	Armourer Roasa
Production Managers José Luis García Arrojo	Film Extracts <i>Mutiny on the Bounty</i> (1935)
Poland: Michal Szczerdic	<i>They Died With Their Boots On</i> (1941)
England: Dominic Wright	Cast
Casting John Hubbard	Terence Stamp Darman
Rose Hubbard	Patsy Kensit Rebeca
Assistant Directors Salvador Pons	José Luis Gómez Ugarte/Valdivia
Iña Luders	Geraldine James Rebeca Osorio
Screenplay Pilar Miró	Simón Andreu Andrade
Mario Camus	Alexander Bardini Bernal
Juan Antonio Porto	John McEnery Walter
Based on the novel <i>Beltenebros</i> by Antonio Muñoz Molina	Jorge de Juan Luque
Director of Photography Javier Aguirresarobe	Pedro Díez del Corral
Panavision	Felipe Vélez Policemen
Colour Eastman Color	Carlos Hipólito Club Owner
Camera Operator Julio Madurga	Paco Casares Train Steward
Steadicam Operator Carles Cadeceran	Queta Claver Club Dancer
Editor José Luis Matesanz	William Job Howard
Art Directors Fernando Saénz	Magda Wojcik Polish Tango Dancer
Luis Vallés	Bernice Stegers Darman's Wife
Poland: Ewa Braun	Vicente Cuesta Concierge
Special Effects Reyes Abades	Pawek Unrug Polish Driver
Music José Nieto	Iñaki Guevara Waiter
Songs "Put the Blame on Mame" by A. Roberts,	Antonio Orengo Beggars
D. Fisher; "El Dia Que Me Quieras" by Alfredo Le Pera, Carlos Gardel; "Sador a Mi" by Alvaro Carrillo	10,260 feet
Choreographer Goyo Montero	114 minutes
Costume Design Pepe Rubio	English dialogue
Make-up Artists Juan Pedro Hernandez	
Poland: Dorota Roquedlo	

● Madrid, 1962. Political exile Darman sets off with nightclub singer Rebeca on the train to Lisbon. He thinks back to the start of this mission, when a messenger sent him from his antiquarian bookshop in Scarborough to a rendezvous in Warsaw. Guided by Spanish Communist Luque, he learns of his true purpose: to return to Madrid and execute a traitor who has betrayed his fellow comrades in

the anti-Franco resistance.

Darman thinks back to a similar case in 1946, when he had killed Walter, the lover of another Rebeca, although both had protested he was innocent. Walter was the projectionist in the cinema in which resistance fighter Valdivia was hiding out from the police. Now Darman searches the warehouse where he has been told the supposed traitor Andrade is to be found. Instead he encounters his girlfriend Rebeca, whose nightclub performance he witnesses that night. Rebeca is interrogated by the shadowy Inspector Ugarte, who sexually assaults her. Later she drugs Darman and takes Andrade the passport and gun that Darman had brought with him. On his recovery, Darman checks into the Hotel Nacional; on the roof he has a final confrontation with Andrade, who continues to protest his innocence as he is shot by Luque.

Darman returns to the now abandoned cinema where he had killed Walter. There he discovers that Valdivia and Ugarte are one and the same person. As the cinema screen bursts into flame, Darman shoots Ugarte, and flees with Rebeca to the station where the train will take both to safety.

● The films of Pilar Miró pose something of a problem. On the one hand we have the spectacular sadism of a real-life drama such as *El crimen de Cuenca* (1979) with its pitilessly extended torture scenes. On the other hand, we find the leisurely aestheticism of a literary adaptation such as *Werther* (1986). At first sight *Beltenebros* would seem to belong to the second category. The participation of veteran art-house producer Andrés Vicente Gómez, the script credit for Mario Camus (known as a director of tasteful literary adaptations) and the showy double role for José Luis Gómez, a respected figure in classical theatre and cinema, all suggest 'quality' to a Spanish audience. Moreover, the true star of the film is the art design. Scarborough and Warsaw can rarely have been shot in such delicate shades of grey, and the mean streets of Madrid, dark and glistening, are interspersed with atmospheric locations which display the capital's architecture at its sombre best: Atocha Station, the cavernous abandoned warehouses and cinemas.

As government-appointed head of Spanish film production in the mid-80s, Pilar Miró backed so many disappointing literary adaptations that her enemies accused her of inventing a new genre: the subsidized assassination. Under her own direction, however, *Beltenebros* surpasses that soft-focus aestheticism which disfigures so many Spanish period pieces. The credit sequence, in which Stamp and Kensit descend into the bowels of the station, is but the first of a number of bravura Steadicam pieces which reveal an undeniable command of cinematic technique. Similar scenes shot in the Metro or labyrinthine hotel corridors also benefit from fluid camerawork

and noirish lighting.

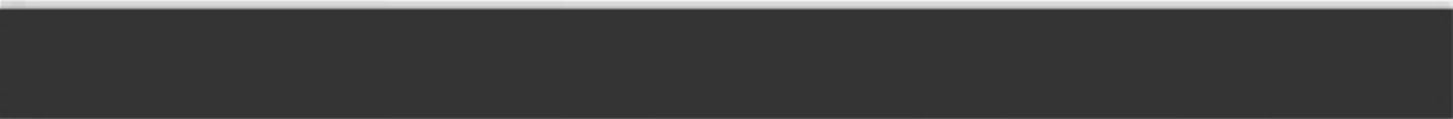
However, problems are also apparent from the beginning. While novelist Muñoz Molina's original pays affectionate homage to Hollywood, once retranslated into English the dialogue ("They're following me. I'm afraid.") falls very flat. It is not helped by the portentous mode of performance Miró has elicited from her actors, who appear to be heavily sedated for much of the film. The press synopsis claims hopefully, "Events move rapidly"; but the opacity of a plot built around parallel action and multiple flashbacks is rivalled only by the slowness of its exposition.

Unaided by the synopsis, even the characters' nationality remains unclear. It takes some suspension of disbelief to take so English an actress as Geraldine James for a Spanish communist militant with a sideline in romantic fiction; and despite Kensit's animated version of 'Put the Blame on Mame', as a femme fatale she has decidedly less Hispanic potential than Rita Hayworth. The confusion of languages provokes an awkward deracination. Actors with a variable command of the language speak invariably in English; and one wonders why the characters are shown watching original soundtrack versions of *They Died With Their Boots On* and *Mutiny on the Bounty* at a time when all foreign films were dubbed by vigilant Francoist censors.

Ironically, it is in these very self-conscious references to US film and literature that the film's specifically Spanish flavour lies. Fiction since Franco (especially by crime writers and women) has made much of metafictional devices such as intertextual reference; and there has been a reassessment of the Spanish reception of film noir and the woman's picture. When viewed under dictatorship, the shadows of noirish thrillers acquired a political charge; the two Rebecas of *Beltenebros* invoke Hitchcock's heroine, whose neuroses were read by Spanish women as a subversive antidote to the relentless optimism required of them by the Falange. The title of one of the fictional pulp novels written by the Geraldine James character is *Mujer marcada* ('Framed Woman'); and all of *Beltenebros*' characters are enclosed in an ironic frame of reference which may well prove invisible to UK audiences.

Miró is not the first Spanish director to turn to English-speaking actors and dialogue in the quest for an elusive international market: José-Luis Borau's *Río abajo* (1984) and Fernando Trueba's *The Mad Monkey* (1989) are earlier, unhappy precedents. Like them, *Beltenebros* is likely to slip between two stools: too slow and arty for the mainstream; insufficiently ethnic for an art audience that prefers a Spanish cinema (Almodóvar, Bigas Luna) that is unambiguously foreign and spicy. *Beltenebros* remains, however, an intriguing anomaly. And Terence Stamp's steely gravitas adds a touch of class to a flawed but fascinating production by a gifted and contradictory film-maker.

Paul Julian Smith



Cool Runnings

USA 1993

Director: Jon Turteltaub

Certificate PG	Special Effects Lars Lenander
Distributor Buena Vista	Music Hans Zimmer
Production Company Walt Disney Company	Additional: Nick Glennie-Smith
Executive Producers Christopher Meledandri	Music Extract "Blue Danube" by Johann Strauss
Susan B. Landau	Orchestrations Nick Glennie-Smith
Producer Dawn Steel	Bruce Fowler
Production Co-ordinators Yvonne Melville	Music Editor Laura Perlman
Jamaica: Mary Cay Hollander	Songs "Love You Want" by Winston Matthews,
Unit Production Managers Casey Grant	Lloyd McDonald,
Jamaica: Natalie Thompson	Richard Feldman,
Location Managers Tom Benz	"Picky Picky Head" by Lloyd McDonald,
Jamaica: Jeremy Francis	"Wild Wild Life" by David Byrne,
2nd Unit Manager Tom Benz	performed by Wailing Souls; "Stir it Up" by Bob Marley,
2nd Unit Director Micky Moore	performed by Diana King; "Cool Me Down" by Norman Jackson,
Casting Chemin Sylvia Bernard	performed by Tiger; "Sweet Jamaica" by Patrick Barrett, Garnett Smith,
Jaki Brown-Karman	performed by Tony Rebel; "Going Nowhere and Getting There Fast" by Ron Livingston;
Associate: Phaedra Harris	"Dolly My Baby" by William Maragh, T. Sparks,
Canada: Stuart Aikins	performed by Super Cat; "Jamaican Bobsledding Chant" by Malik Yoba,
Jamaica: Janet Morrison	Charmaine LaCosta, Sabrina Cohen, Angela Wilks, Linda Scott,
Maxine Plummer	performed by Worl-A-Girl; "Rise Above It" by P.C. Harris, Peter Curry,
Assistant Directors Bruce Franklin	performed by Lock, Stock and Barrel; "I Can See Clearly Now" by Johnny Cash,
Kim Winther	performed by Jimmy Cliff
Grant Lucibello	Costume Design Grania Preston
Jim Brebner	Costume Supervisors Joanne Hansen
Jamaica: Avi Kleinberger	Jamaica: Lynda Foote
Franz Marzouca	Key Make-up Artist Norma Hill Patton
Michael London	Hairstylist Veronica Candre
2nd Unit: Michael Williams	Title Design R.E.D. Productions
Douglas Berquist	Titles Cinema Research Corporation
Brian Whittred	Supervising Sound Editor Mark Mangini
Screenplay Lynn Siefert	Sound Editors Michael J. Benavente
Tommy Swerdlow	Warren Hamilton Jnr
Michael Goldberg	Supervising ADR Editor Julia Evershade
Story Lynn Siefert	Foley Editor Mary Ruth Smith
Michael Ritchie	Sound Recordists Larry Sutton
Based on a true story of the 1988 Jamaican Olympic Bobsled Team	2nd Unit: Per Asplund
Director of Photography Phedon Papamichael	Music: Jay Rifkin
In colour	ADR Recordists Doc Kane
Prints by Technicolor	Troy Porter
2nd Unit Director of Photography Rexford Metz	Foley Recordist David Gertz
Camera Operators Peter F. Woeste	Dolby stereo
B:	Sound Re-recordists Terry Porter
Armin Matter	Mel Metcalfe
2nd Unit: Joel Ransom	David J. Hudson
Video Playback Rob Parisien	Foley Artists Ellen Heuer
Opticals Buena Vista Opticals	Kevin Bartnoff
Editor Bruce Green	
Production Designer Stephen Marsh	
Art Directors Rick Roberts	
Jamaica: Gary Kosko	
Set Decorators Lesley Beale	
Jamaica: Scott Jacobson	
Scenic Artists Gary Clayton Ripley	
Jamaica: Alain Giguere	
Special Effects Co-ordinator Bill Orr	

Dialect Consultant Sharon Stone Stunt Co-ordinator Jacob Rupp Stunts Ernie Jackson Ousaun Elam Ron Robinson Kiante Elam David Stevenson Terrence Walters Errol Gee Gene Williams Stuart Thorpe Gregg Danridge Peter Provebs Jalon Raney Jason Glass Brian Bennett Tom Glass Ernie Johnson Tom Eirickson Carlos Spivey Brent Woolsey Kelsee Devoreaux Guy Bews Irving Lewis Ken Kirzinger Jacob Rupp David Mylrea Dawn Stofer-Rupp Yves Cameron Shane Lemar Charles Andre Robert Paisley Animal Trainer Steve McAuliff	Charles Hyatt Whitby Bevil Snr Winston Stona Coolidge Bertina Macauley Joy Bannock Pauline Stone Myrie Momma Coffie Kristoffer Cooper Winston Bill Dow Registration Official Jay Brazeau Kroychzech Campbell Lane Shindler Matthew Walker German Official Christopher Gaze British Official Jack Goth Gremmer David Lovgren Swiss Captain Kerwin Kerr Deamion Robinson Boys Beverly Brown Cyrene Tomlinson Women Oliver Hunter Joseph FitzWeir Uncle Ferte Teddy Price Drunk Charles Harvey Clive Anderson Cops Michael London Heckler Lloyd Roache Push Cart Darby Starter Cheryl Kroeker Hotel Clerk Karyn J. Scott Line Dancer Craig Lehto Bobsled Starter Al Trautwig Himself John Morgan Himself
Cast Leon Derice Bannock Doug E. Doug Sanka Coffie Rawle D. Lewis Junior Bevil Malik Yoba Yul Brenner John Candy Irving Blitzer Raymond J. Barry Kurt Hemphill Peter Outerbridge Josef Grool Paul Coeur Roger Larry Gilman Larry	8,837 feet 98 minutes

● Jamaica, 1987. Like his father before him, Derice Bannock is going to be a gold medal-winning sprinter, while his happy-go-lucky friend Sanka Coffie skilfully confirms his dominance in the island’s push-cart derby. When the time comes for Derice’s Olympic 100m trial, rich man’s son Junior Bevil shakes Derice’s hand at the start, but in the race he falls and trips both him and formidable bald hardman Yul Brenner.

Unsuccessfully trying to convince Jamaican Olympic Committee president Coolidge to re-run the race, Derice sees a picture of his father with an American medal winner, Irving Blitzer, who came to try and harness Jamaican sprinting talent in a bobsled team, but failed, and is now an unsuccessful bookie. Realising the bobsled is now his best chance to go to the Olympics, Derice recruits Sanka and goes to persuade a reluctant Irv to coach them. Many hopefuls gather to fill the other places, until Irv shows them a film of horrific sled crashes. Then only Junior and Yul remain. The quartet begins training. The process is painful but they make progress. The Olympic Committee will not give them any money and requests for sponsorship are met with ridicule, but Junior sells his car, and they’re off to Calgary.

Arriving in Canada, they struggle to acclimatise to icy conditions. Irv is

hated by the bob-sled establishment but manages to pull strings to get his team a rickety sled. Rival competitors give the Jamaicans a hard time, but despite this, and numerous obstacles the authorities put in their way, they manage to qualify. Their first televised run is a disaster, but their second is a triumph. The third and final run starts off even better, but ends in a horrific crash as the rickety sled collapses. The quartet emerges unscathed, and carry their broken carriage over the line to a tumultuous reception.

● All hail that rare beast, the novelty Olympian redemption drama with an inter-racial buddy aspect. Trailed as “a new comedy for all audiences”, this heartwarming Disney cocktail of sun and snow – filmed on no-expenses-spared location in Calgary and Jamaica – has already gone down well in America. There is no reason why it should not do the same here, though it might benefit from a last minute title-change to *Chariots of Ice*.

Irv, the disgraced bob-sledder who has regained the power to dream, is a role tailor-made for John Candy, and he wears it well, shifting swiftly and with considerable grace out of grouch (“Let me lay out some difficulties: snow, you don’t have any”) and into serious bonding mode. His four athletic protégés – true Olympian, chirpy slacker, oppressed richboy and complex hardman – do not have quite such room for manoeuvre within their types, and are required to mug even more shamelessly than Candy is. Leon is the most familiar face among them; he was the saintly statue that came to life in Madonna’s “Like A Prayer” video. CVs full of award-winning crack-addict ex-basketball player roles point to an inequality of opportunity in Hollywood that is every bit as great, and rather less mitigated by circumstance, as that in winter sports.

Cool Runnings’ plot loses nothing in for being based on fact; the film-makers having, in their own words, “applied creative license to illuminate a unique scenario”. The theme is difference – Sanka with a hot water bottle inside his cat-suit, a babble of aggressive Germanic voices wishing the plucky Jamaicans back where they came from – but it’s basically the same old story. The film constantly pushes the obvious cultural and climactic buttons, but the longer it goes on, the harder it is not to be moved by it.

Green shoots of corn are frequently visible. But there is something unusual going on here as well. How often does a Hollywood sporting drama actually practise what it preaches in terms of it not being the winning but the taking part that counts? *Cool Runnings* keeps faith with Irv’s hard-earned realisation that “A gold medal is a wonderful thing, but if you’re not enough without it, you’ll never be enough with it”, and in so doing earns a real thrill for its coda – “in 1992 the Jamaican bobsledding team returned to the Olympics, as equals”.

Ben Thompson

La Corsa dell'innocente (Flight of the Innocent)

Italy 1993

Director: Carlo Carlei

Certificate 18 Distributor Buena Vista Production Company Cristaldi Film/ Fandango In association with Raitre Fildebroc Executive Producers Massimo Cristaldi Bruno Ricci Producers Franco Cristaldi Domenico Procacci Associate Producer Gabriella Carosio Production Supervisors Francesco Merolle Carlo Pasini Patrizia Tallarico Assistant Directors Olivier Gérard Arianna Battistelli Francesco Cuturi 2nd Unit: Sandro de Santis Screenplay Carlo Carlei Gualtiero Rosella Story Carlo Carlei Director of Photography Raffaele Mertes Colour Technicolor Camera Operator Giorgio Urbinelli Steadicam Operator Sebastiano de Pascalis Editors Carlo Fontana Claudio di Mauro Production Designer Franco Ceraolo Visual Consultant Paolo Zeccara Special Effects Zed Immagini Speciali Music Carlo Siliotto Music Performed by Bulgarian Symphony Orchestra Piano/Electronic Programming: Maurizio Abeni Percussion: Fulvio Maras Kaval: Theodosii Spassov Soloist: Paola Moscarelli Children's Voices: Rocco Siliotto Riccardo Rizzo Music Consultant Victor Ciuckov Costume Design Mariolina Bono Make-up Alessandro Bertolazzi Hairstylist Giancarlo Lucchetti Title Design Studio 4	Sound Editor Aurelio Pennacchia Sound Recordists Roberto Petrozzi Adriano di Lorenzo Dolby stereo Consultant: Frederico Savina Sound Effects Cine Audio Effects Fernando Caso Alvaro Gramigna Chief Armourer Sal Borgese Armourer Roberto Pace Cast Manuel Colao Vito Francesca Neri Marta Rienzi Jacques Perrin Davide Rienzi Frederico Pacifici Scarface Sal Borgese Vito's Father Lucio Zagaria Orlando Giusi Cataldo Giovanna Massimo Lodolo Rocco Anita Zagaria Vito's Mother Isabelle Mantero Policewoman Nicola Di Pinto Questor Severino Saltarelli Scarface's Driver Gianfranco Barra Porter Giovanni Pallavicino Vito's Grandfather Anna Lelio Vito's Grandmother Beppe Chierici Don Silvio Veronica Del Chiappa Stefania Sandro Barletta Simone Cesare Barbetti Davide Rienzi's Voice Silvio Anselmo Marcello Arnone Sandro Barletta Alberto Capone Nanni Coppola Paolo de Giorgio Adriana de Guilmi Paolo Fiorino Ester Galazzi Raffaele Gangale Beatrice Kruger Antonio Lacquaniti Fabrizio Mastracchi Manes Dario Natale Luigi Rinaldi Giuseppe Ruggiero Marcello Scuderi Alessandro Stefanelli 9,449 feet 10S minutes Subtitles
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● Calabria. Two shepherds are shot down by a group of bandits. The following day, a gang wielding machine-guns arrive at the house of ten-year-old Vito, whose father was one of the bandits. They wipe out the

entire family, except for Vito, who manages to hide. He runs to a cave in the hills, where he sees one of the attackers leaning over the body of his dead brother, as well as another dead child. He picks up a small rucksack belonging to the child, but is pursued by the man, who has a heavily scarred face. After a chase through a nearby village, Vito escapes on a train.

Vito’s family had kidnapped the young child, Simone Rienzi, for ransom. On the train, Vito is fascinated as he leafs through Simone’s schoolbooks in the rucksack. In another village, he sees Simone’s parents on television pleading with the ransomers to return their son. They have already paid two billion lira and clearly think their son is still alive. Arriving in Rome by truck, Vito tracks down a cousin, Orlando, who tells him the bandits will not find him there. But one day the two of them return to Orlando’s flat and find it ransacked. Orlando recovers a packet of money and gives it to Vito. The two of them leave the flat, but Scarface is waiting for them outside, and shoots Orlando. Vito is able to escape with the ransom money in his rucksack.

Next day, Vito is spotted by two policewomen and, after hiding his rucksack, allows himself to be taken in. He is sent to a children’s home, pending investigation, but a friend of Orlando turns up and takes him away, determined to get his hands on the money.

Vito gives him the slip, picks up his rucksack, and makes for the Rienzi home, near Siena. Breaking into the house, he is spotted by Simone’s mother, who, in her grief, thinks he is her son. Vito tells them that Simone is dead, but they do not want to believe him. Simone’s father Davide is due to meet the kidnappers that night to pay a further instalment in return for his son; Vito hides in the back of his car. At the rendezvous, Scarface and an accomplice turn up aiming to trick Davide into giving them the money, even though Simone is dead. But Vito emerges from the car to tell Davide of the trick. The kidnappers capture Vito and demand the other sack of money, but once more he gives them the slip. They give chase and Scarface shoots him before the police arrive and capture the kidnappers. As Vito lies wounded, he has a vision of his family sitting at a long dining table with Simone’s family. The ambulancemen take him away. Finally, Vito sits at Simone’s desk, having taken the place of the dead child.

● Carlo Carlei’s misguided attempt to fuse the racy realism of American film-making with the rural poetry of his native country’s tradition threatens at several points to turn into something a good deal more interesting. But his film is ultimately scuppered by the absence of an incisive screenplay and the resort – sadly, not uncommon in today’s Italian cinema – to a sentimental ending which would surely have curled the toes of Carlei’s neo-realist forefathers. The avowed aim of the

director may be a Scorsese-meets-the-Tavianis on a sultry afternoon in Calabria, but none of the figures so admired by Carlei would have the effrontery to end such a profoundly violent movie on the complacent, doe-eyed expression of a ten-year-old boy happily settled into a new life of bourgeois comfort.

Things start well enough, with a tense, edgy opening vaguely reminiscent of Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West*, but replacing Ennio Morricone's fuzz-boxed electric guitar with screaming crickets, violently flapping bird-wings and a natural habitat which pays scant respect to innocence. The opening salvo of murders is convincingly-paced and disturbing; but once Vito has his first close escape – and there are far too many of these throughout the film – the tension is dissipated and there is nothing of substance to take its place. There is certainly a missed opportunity here, for there is still plenty to be said about the complex relationship between Northern and Southern Italy, a feature which continues to dominate the country's rapidly-changing political landscape. As the film moves from the barren fields of Calabria to the sumptuous luxury of the Rienzis' Tuscan villa, via a hectic interlude in Rome, we are barely made aware of the transition between what could be said to be two different countries, beyond the shifting visual backdrops. The nearest we get to a state-of-the-nation report is in cousin Orlando's speech to Vito on the power of money to intimidate and protect, but this is too isolated and clumsy an example to be effective.

Less successful still are Carlei's attempts to get metaphysical. Even if one accepts that children can save the world – and this depth of insight is probably best confined to Coca Cola advertising – too little is made of the symbiotic relationship between the privileged Simone, killed in the name of greed and resentment, and the poorly-educated Vito, who in determining to tell the truth to Simone's parents, finds in himself the delicate sensibilities required to end once and for all the interminable cycle of violence of North-South mutual hatred.

Carlei's heroes, such as Olmi or Tarkovsky, would surely have made more of the film's few genuinely dislocating moments such as Vito's wandering about in a deserted chemical plant which stands as a testament to political corruption and scandal. And they would never have countenanced the wildly over-the-top performance of Federico Pacifici as the ubiquitous (and apparently very stupid) Scarface. The film's final moments veer even more uneasily between comic-book brevity and pseudo-surrealism; a pallid dream sequence and the ultimate doppelganger effect of the closing scene are laughable in their attempt to resolve the preceding blood-baths. Italian directors be warned: your happy shiny people and well-scrubbed toddlers are giving innocence a bad name.

Peter Aspden

Daens

Belgium/France/Netherlands 1992

Director: Stijn Coninx

Certificate
15
Distributor
Mayfair Entertainment
Production Companies
Favourite Films/
Investco/Kredietbank
Luxembourg
In association with
Films Dérives/
Titane/Shooting Star
Film Company/BRTN
Fictie/KRO Drama
Supported by the
Eurimages Fund of the
Council of Europe
Executive Producer
Poland:
Szymon Zaleski
Producer
Dick Impens
Associate Producers
Jean-Luc Ormières
Hans Pos
Maria Peters
Dave Schram
Production Manager
Guy de Lombaert
Poland:
Ryszard Chutkowski
Italy:
Bruno Frasca
Location Manager
Johan Van Den
Driessche
Eddy Stevesyns
Hervé Heijmans
Poland:
Jacek Kucharski
Casting
Continental Casting:
Charlotte Dautcourt
Job Gosschalk
Assistant Directors
Patrice Martineau
Els Rastelli
Fons Feyaerts
Johan Dirckx
Guy Goossens
Philippe Van Damme
Poland:
Andrei Kotkowski
Grazyna Szymanska
Italy:
Federico Fusco
Claudio Lattes
Screenplay
François Chevallier
Stijn Coninx
Based on the novel
Pieter Daens by
Louis Paul Boon
Director of Photography
Wather Vanden Ende
In colour
Camera Operator
Yves Vandermeeren
Editor
Ludo Troch
Production Designer
Allan Starski
Art Directors
Hubert Pouille
Poland:
Ewa Tarnowska
Set Dresser
Guy Cantraine
Special Effects
Poland:
Miroslaw Marchwinski
Music
Dirk Brossé
Music Performed by
New Belgian Chamber
Orchestra
Music Consultants
Walter Heynen
Riet Jaeken
Costume Design
Yan Tax
Wardrobe
Poland:
Anna Kornatowska
Anna Krukowska
Malgorzata Ajzeli

Make-up
Winnie Gallis
Poland:
Alfreda Haczek
Hair
Dirk Naastepad
Titles
Test
Sound Editors
Philippe Ravoet
Erik de Vos
Ewin Ryckaert
Sound Recordists
Henri Morelle
Jean-Paul Loublier
Additional:
Philippe Baudhun
Music:
William Flageolet
Dolby stereo
Sound Effects
Marie-Jeanne
Wyckmans
Philippe Van Leer
Historical Consultants
Karel Baert
Frans-Jos Verdoot
Script Consultants
Marga Neirynck
Herman Van De Vijver
Joost De Werth
Addie Weyers
Ecclesiastical Advisor
Matthieu Nelisson
Stunt Co-ordinators
Robert Brzezinski
Bogdan Michalak
Stunts
Ryszard Janikowski
Jacek Kadluwbowski
Sylwester Zawadski
Janusz Chlebowski
Zofia Bachleda
Stefan Wojcicki
Bogdan Michalak
Tomasz Przybysz
Andrzej Sredzinski
Jozef Grzeszczak
Zbigniew Madej
Jozef Stefanski

Cast
Jan Declair
Adolf Daens
Gérard Desarthe
Charles Woeste
Antje De Boeck
Nette Scholliers
Michael Pas
Jan De Meeter
Johan Leysen
Schmitt
Idwig Stéphane
Eugène Borremans
Wim Meuwissen
Pieter Daens
JappeClaes
Ponnet
Julien Schoenaerts
Bishop Stillemans
Karel Baetens
Jefke
BritAlen
Louise Daens
Brenda Bertin
Marie
Alex Wilequet
Monsignor Goossens
Rik Hancke
Nuncio
Giovanni Di Benedetto
Cardinal
Fred Van Kuijk
Mayor Vanwambeke
Gerald Marti
King Leopold II
Frank Vercruyssen
Louis Scholliers
Koen Van Impe
Baron de Béthune
Paul Wuyts
Father Scholliers
Marilou Mermans
Mother Scholliers
Mark Peeters
Vandermeersch
Filip Van Luchene
Lambrecht

Herbert Flack
Vanlangenhove
Yves Degen
Druwe
Marc Legein
Cumont
Gaston Bertin
Leirens
Max Schnur
Old Man
Anna Grazyna Suchocka
Julia
Peter Van Asbroeck
Gust
Gert Portael
Zulma
Stijn Meuris
Pier
Iwona Hoffman
Clarice
Lucd'Heu
Doctor Claus
Jean Gérardy
Missionary
Roger Francel
President of the House
of Representatives
Daniel Dury
Committee President
Micheline Hardy
Madame Woeste
Els De Schepper
Josee
Mark Van Eeghem
Jules
Max Croiset
Father Abbot
Jef Vandemeulebroucke
Borremans Junior
Julia Banasziewicz
Nini
Gilbert Charles
Leon Niemczyk
Tadeusz Teodorczyk
Bruno Bukowski
Andrzej Gloskowski
Committee Members
Door Van Boeckel
Achiel Eeman
Stef Baeyens
Cavalry Officer

● Flanders, 1888. Inspired by Pope Leo XIII's encyclical condemning poverty, Catholic priest Adolf Daens decides to devote his life to the dispossessed and needy. He goes to live in the industrial city of Aalst where his brother Pieter is the editor of a prominent Catholic newspaper. On arrival, Daens is appalled by the suffering he sees. He begins work on his brother's newspaper and writes an article denouncing conditions in the city. The president of the Catholic Party, Charles Woeste, decides that the rebellious workers will have to be dealt with. He decides that the cotton mills of Aalst will adopt the 'Scottish system'. This involves sacking all the male employees and using women to work the machines for less pay.

Daens becomes tutor to the son of Aalst factory worker Eugène Borremans. While Daens is giving a Latin lesson, Jefke, a street urchin, throws a stone through the window, hitting the priest on the head. Daens then follows Jefke to the slum where he lives. He loses sight of the urchin, but is taken in by Nette Scholliers, a plucky working girl who nurses his bleeding head. He sees that her family live on potatoes and that the younger children work on the night shift. He is told that Nette's older brother Louis is a member of a gang of right-wing thugs, the Bucks.

Pressure from the Church and the public leads to an investigation into working conditions in Aalst. During the visit of the investigators, Nette tries to explain how badly the women are

Slawomir Maciejewski
Commissioner
André Simon
Raymond
Mano Verretu
Coach Driver
Günther Lesage
Journalist
Vic Moeremans
Abbot
Myriam Bronzwaar
Mother Nini
Matthias Schoenaerts
Wannes Scholliers
Jan Verstedén
Theoke
Günther Goossens
Tuur
Saartje Loos
Helen Van Humbeeck
Daens' Daughters
Debby Appermans
Ingrid De Smedt
Marleen De Smedt
Louise Frateur
Olivier Janssens
Jan Van Keerbergen
Scholliers Children
Ludwik Benoit
Man With Handcart
Benowefa Korska
Lisette
Miroslaw Jekot
Dariusz Kowalski
Jacek Luczak
Tadeusz Falana
JecekSut
Men
Barbara Polomska
Wieslawa Grochowska
Men

12,419 feet
138 minutes

Subtitles



Turbulent priest: Jan Declair

treated, but none of the committee members speak Dutch. When they have left, a little boy, Millike, is crushed by a machine and killed. The women are horrified and Nette leads a spontaneous protest, carrying Millike's body through the streets of Aalst. The torchlit procession is met by armed gendarmes who attack the demonstrators and snatch Millike's body.

The Daens brothers decide to set up their own party, the Christian People's Party. Despite bribery and vote-rigging by Woelste, Daens wins a place in parliament. He denounces Woeste for his treatment of the people of Aalst. Leading churchmen meet to decide what to do about Daens, but come to no decision. Instead, the Pope himself summons Daens to Rome. He keeps the priest waiting for several days, then refuses to grant him an audience. Instead Daens is passed a note from the Pope telling him to stay away from politics. He returns to Aalst humiliated.

In Aalst, things have gone from bad to worse. The writings of the Daens brothers have been banned and Adolf is under pressure to give up his parliamentary seat. The Bucks smash up Pieter's printing presses and Adolf decides to retire from politics.

● From the very beginning of the title sequence, you know this film is going to be about the Past with a large 'P'. A dark satanic mill is shown in gloomy black and white; child workers scramble about picking up the bits of cotton which fall from vast noisy looms. Outside, more children clamber over slag heaps to find coal to take home to their families. This may be nineteenth-century Flanders, but these are images of Europe's common industrial history. Such images will be familiar to British audiences from generation after generation of TV adaptations of Dickens and the Brontës.

The great thing about the Past, especially this chunk of it, is that although life was clearly pretty dreadful for the vast majority of the population, it was also relatively simple. In this system of things, mill owners were always evil and cruel; the Church, politicians and the press were, for the most part, in the pay of these evil, cruel mill owners and the working people were underpaid and underfed. And then there were the heroes, like Adolf Daens, who fought to improve the working ►

◀ conditions of ordinary people – it is to them that we owe our comfortable, if rather complicated and confusing, lives.

There are a number of problems with this film. But the main one is that everything is so, well, black and white. After the title sequence we are treated to colour film stock at least, but director Stijn Coninx sticks to his own monochrome vision of social and political relations. Adolf Daens is just very nice and kind and good and everybody likes him – apart from the cruel mill owners, that is. So when the ever-patient Bishop Stillemanns takes Daens aside and asks him if he thinks his campaign for better working conditions is driven by personal vanity, you are just dying for a bit of soul-searching, a bit of character development. But all we get is a slightly hurt expression flickering gently across Adolf Daens’ face.

This candyfloss approach to history is more or less bearable until about halfway through the film, when Daens starts campaigning for his Christian People’s Party. We see him on the hustings in Aalst preaching about the twin demons of capitalism and socialism. Just as he gets into his stride, a menacing group of young reds approaches, banners aloft, revolutionary fire in their eyes. Again we long for some conflict, a twist of the plot which might make things a little more interesting. Instead, we get one of the most ridiculous climb-downs in the history of the international labour movement. Rather than challenge the well-meaning priest’s naive reformism, the leader of the radicals agrees to throw in his lot with the Christian People’s Party. “The time is not right for revolution,” he says. “For the time being we will join you in your struggle for better conditions in Aalst.” “Hurrah!” shout the liberals from the ruling Catholic Party who have also come to hear Daens speak. “We want to teach the conservatives in our party a lesson. We too will join you in your struggle for better conditions in Aalst.”

At the climax of the film, the members of the committee who have come to investigate conditions in Aalst are at the theatre. Outside, the gendarmes are hacking down unarmed demonstrators with their swords. The play is a trashy farce about the dissolute working classes. A drunken factory hand comes home and shouts at his wife because there is no food on the table. She says that there is no food because he spends all his money on drink. “All right,” he says, “if there’s no money, we’ll send the children to work in the factory.” It is not clear what this scene is doing there except, perhaps, to further reinforce the idea that the Belgian bourgeoisie are uncaring brutes. I couldn’t help thinking that the play gave a rather good outline of the main themes and concerns of the film I was watching. When we first see the turbulent priest, his mentor Bishop Stillemanns is heard to mutter, “God save us from Daens”. I couldn’t agree more.

Martin Bright

Grief

USA 1993

Director: Richard Glatzer

Certificate Not yet issued	Title Graphics Mark Thompson
Distributor ICA Projects	Titles/Opticals Mar Elepaño
Production Company Grief Productions	Sound/Dialogue Editor Alberto Garcia
Executive Producer Marcus Hu	Production Sound Mixer Thomas Jones
Producers Ruth Charny Yoram Mandel	Dolby stereo
Line Producer Nancy Nickerson	Sound Re-recordists Lead: Jon Taylor Alan Decker
Associate Producers Jack De Palma Valerie Pappas	Foley: Eric Marin Alan Decker
Production Associate Sue Snyder	Sound Transfers Cinesound
Production Co-ordinator Richard Huggard	Foley Artist Michael Salvetta
Post-production Co-ordinators Bruce McCarthy Mark Frazier Alyse Rome	Cast Craig Chester Mark Jackie Beat Jo Ileana Douglas Leslie Alexis Arquette Bill Carlton Wilborn Jeremy Lucy Gutteridge Paula RobinSwid Kelly Bill Rotko Bill #2 Shawn Hoffman Ben Frank Rehwaldt Greg Bennett Movers Mickey Cottrell Judge Catherine Connella Beverley/Ginger Mary Woronov Mauri Bernstein Paul Bartel JasonWoll Michael Now Mike Ventre Attorneys Jeffrey Hilbert Antonio Johanna Went Marleen Kent Fuher Harvey Joan Valencia Tutti Beatrice Manley Loretta Ian Abercrombie Stanley John Fleck Ben/Chaz Sloane Bosniak Susie
Editors Robin Katz William W. Williams	7,830 feet
Production Designer Don Diers	87 minutes
SetDecorator David Carpender	
Set Dresser Ethan Pines	
Music Tom Judson	
Songs “Dead Horse Alive with Flies” by and performed by Harold Budd; “Un Canadien Errant” (trad.), performed by Ian & Sylvia; “By The Time It Gets Dark” by Sandy Denny, performed by Kevin Grivois; “Warm”, “Mindover” by and performed by Kevin Grivois; “Loosen Up”, “All I Want” by and performed by Carlton Wilborn	
Costume Design Laser N. Rosenberg	
Wardrobe Supervisor Joan Valencia	
Hair/Make-up Isabelle Pilliere	
Title Design Ameeta Nanji Jeffrey Hilbert	

● One working week in the production office of *The Love Judge*, a daytime television show about a divorce court. Video clips from the series are interspersed with scenes showing the office workers interacting with each other. Mark, a story editor for the show, is still grieving for his lover Kenny, who died of Aids a year ago this week. He confides to his friend Jeremy, a scriptwriter for the show, that he is strongly attracted to Bill, an apparently heterosexual writer who has just broken up with his girlfriend Kelly. Jeremy warns Mark off Bill, insisting that he couldn’t be interested



Trouble coming every day: Craig Chester

in him. Jo, the series’ producer, announces over the course of the week that she is leaving to go and live in Prague with her new husband and that she has nominated Mark and Paula, another story editor, as candidates for her successor. Leslie, the secretary, develops a flirtation with Ben, the photocopier repairman, and tries to interest Mark in her script for the show.

As the week progresses, it is revealed that Jeremy and Bill have been having a torrid affair for three weeks. Bill, confused about his sexuality, is hesitant about coming out to everyone else, especially since he still has feelings for Kelly, who is now dating a rich performance artist, also named Bill. Mark and Paula endure grilling interviews with the network for Jo’s job. Bill comforts a distraught Mark after his interview, which leads to a passionate kiss. Mark runs away confused.

Later, Jo catches Bill and Jeremy in an embrace in her office. Mark and Jeremy have a confrontation about each other’s relations with Bill. Mark goes missing and everyone fears that he may have committed suicide, but Jeremy tracks him down. Jo manages to have both Mark and Paula appointed co-producers for the show. Leslie’s script is produced, Jeremy and Bill become an official item, and Jo takes everyone out to lunch.

● *Grief* is a deeply likeable movie. Deftly remixing elements of John Waters-style camp and *thirtysomething* yuppie melodrama, art-house aesthetics and pulp fiction, it adds up to much more than the sum of its parts, and marks the debut of talented first-time writer-director Richard Glatzer. His script is as taut as the lycra shorts on Carlton Wilborn, who plays the strutting Jeremy, and as fresh as a transvestite’s new lipstick. You have to hear lines like “I don’t have time for circus lesbians and neither should you” in context in order to appreciate how well Glatzer handles situational comedy. The counterpointing between scenes from the ridiculous *The Love Judge* and the ‘real life’ of the people who produce it neatly illustrates the soapy quality of office passions and politics. *Grief* was partly inspired by Glatzer’s stint as producer of *Divorce Court*, a series to which *The Love Judge* bears an uncanny resemblance. Yet

despite its autobiographical origins, *Grief* is elaborately structured, almost glib in the way that bad TV can often be. For example, an avant-garde video artist who films empty rooms is passingly mentioned early on, and lo and behold, the closing shots show the office, vacated at last. This also neatly alludes to the work of Ozu, whose *Tokyo Story* is instrumental to the plot. Like Gregg Araki’s *The Living End*, *Grief* has an air of film-school cleverness, but its allusions and reworkings are more motivated and controlled than Araki’s.

Though clearly made on a low budget, nothing seems cut-price about *Grief*’s other qualities, especially where the acting is concerned. The ensemble cast of semi-knowns turn in excellent performances, especially Craig Chester as Mark (last seen in Tom Kalin’s *Swoon*), Alexis Arquette as Bill, and drag artist Jackie Beat, aka Kent Fuher, who plays both Jo the lady boss and a minor role as the jilted husband of a circus lesbian in one of the excerpts from *The Love Judge*. Comparisons will be inevitable between Beat and Divine, the Maria Callas of drag, but Beat holds her/his own very well. Watch out also for cameo appearances from Paul Bartel and Mary Woronov of *Eating Raoul* notoriety.

After we have been lulled into a false sense of security by the cheerful fun of its other storylines, the film’s cold central theme of bereavement sneaks up on us unexpectedly. Mark’s grief at the loss of his lover Kenny from Aids has cast an numbing chill over his life, and throws all the humour, especially his, into sharper relief. Afraid to take a chance on a new relationship, hesitant about pursuing promotion, too scared even to take the test for HIV, Mark has put his life on hold ever since Kenny died. In contrast, many of the other characters have reacted to his death by exuberantly seizing the day. Despite all its distractions, *Grief* deals more squarely and honestly with Aids and its effects than most films that focus directly on HIV-positive protagonists. Indeed, it points out that Aids has victims beyond the people who die from it. *Grief* illustrates issues like this well but avoids becoming that stodgiest of film genres, the issue-based movie. It well deserves the cult status for which it seems destined.

Leslie Felperin Sharman

Gunhed

Japan 1989

Director: Masato Harada

Certificate	Production Design
12	Sunrise Inc.
Distributor	Art Directors
Manga	Fumio Ogawa
Production Companies	Special Effects:
Toho Pictures/Sunrise	Tetsuzo Osawa
production	Ndyuki Yoshimura
In association with	Set Decorators
Bandai Co.	Kazo Suzuki
Kadokawa Shoten	Special Effects:
Publishing	Yasuo Nomura
Imagica Corporation	Set Dressers
Executive Producers	Yoshiki Sasahara
Tomoyuki Tanaka	Special Effects:
Eiji Yamaura	Heizo Kamoshida
Producers	Special Effects
Yoshishige Shimatani	Noboru Watanabe
Tetsuhisa Yamada	Kazusuke Takasu
Production Co-ordinator	Technical:
Hiroshi Yamaguchi	Tadaaki Watanabe
Unit Production Manager	Mechanical Design
Yutaka Zeshi	Masaharu Kawamori
Casting	Music
Tadao Tanaka	Toshiyuki Honda
Assistant Directors	Music Producers
Hideyuki Inoue	Hiroshi Kajiwara
Hiroshi Kubo	Masao Iwase
Special Effects:	Tatsuo Ooba
Kiyotaka Matsumoto	Song
Screenplay	"Theme Song" by
Masato Harada	Aireen, Takayuki Baba,
James Bannon	performed by Mariko
Director of Photography	Nagai
Jinichi Fujisawa	Costume Design
In colour	Tokito Yoshida
Visual Effects Photography	Wardrobe Supervisor
Toshimitsu Ooneda	Keisuke Chiyoda
Camera Operators	Make-up Artist
Riyuji Wakiyo	Midori Konuma
Special Effects:	Sound Editor
Kenichi Eguchi	Teiichi Saito
Video Effects	Weapons Adviser
Masato Aizawa	Hiroimichi Izumi
Nobuya Ishida	Weapon Design
Special Visual Effects	Masahisa Suzuki
Koichi Kawakita	Weapons Instructor
Imagica Group	Hisayoshi Takeda
3D	Stunts
QProduction	Koji Matsumoto
Crowd	
SPFXX Studio	Cast
Tsuto Kobo	Landy Leyes
Special Optical Effects	Gunhed
Masahi Nakamura	Masahiro Takashima
Masaharu Sekiguchi	Brenda Bakke
Masaaki Hiraoka	James B. Thompson
Matte Painting Artists	Aya Enjoji
Nobuaki Koga	Yujin Harada
Yukio Kaneko	Kaori Mizushima
Shuji Kakumu	Yousuke Saito
Yuji Kaida	Doll Nguyen
Hiroshi Matsushima	Jay Kabira
Computer Graphics	Micky Curtis
Yutaka Tsuchiya	
Takeo Ootsuka	Narrators
Animation Supervisors	Landy Leyes
Tatsuya Masuzawa	Michael Yancy
Teruo Tsuda	
Effects Animation	9,037 feet
Keita Amamiya	100 minutes
Mitsuaki Ishida	
Motion Control	English version
Sadanori Inaba	
Mitsuharu Haihara	
Laser Cinema	
Kohei Fukuhara	
Editor	
Yoshitami Kuroiwa	

2005. Computer Kyron 5 begins running CyborTech Corporation's robot-manufacturing complex on remote Pacific island 8J0 from level 390 of its 400-storey Mother Tower. 2025. Kyron 5 declares war. Gunhed (military robot) battalions sent against it are defeated by Air Robots 2039. Brooklyn and fellow treasure hunters land on 8J0 to plunder computer chips. Brooklyn and three others join uneasy forces with Ranger Sergeant Nim, pur-

suing a biodroid thief. The biodroid attacks, leaving only Brooklyn, Bebe and Nim to reach Xyron 5's control centre alive.

With a 48-hour countdown under way, the biodroid appears, places a vial on a dias, absorbs Bebe and vanishes. Nim retrieves the vial from Brooklyn. They fall through several levels to be found by 7 and 11, the children of dead CyborTech employees. The four journey back up the Tower. Brooklyn salvages a Gunhed, who informs them that when the countdown ends, the correct keyword plus the vial will give Kyron 5 total interface potential. Nim and 11 go on ahead; the biodroid retrieves the vial from them. Gunhed ascends, to reunite Brooklyn and 7 with Nim and 11 on 390's command centre. The marauding biodroid is exploded by a hand grenade. Nim gives Brooklyn the vial, the four fly from 8J0. Gunhed detonates the complex and survives.

The first proper theatrical release from distributor Manga Entertainment, currently shifting considerable quantities of dubbed Japanese animation (*anime*) on retail video, *Gunhed* spans both the occidental Frankenstein tradition and its postwar oriental 'mecha' counterpart, which tends to feature user-friendly, interchangeable machine-/human-shaped military vehicles-cum-battlesuits piloted/worn by human operators. However, *Gunhed's* computer Kyron 5 is largely inactive, such threat as it poses deriving from the sketchily explained bio-droid's attempt to bring it back on line. Comparison with the obvious anthropomorphism of the resurrected *Gunhed* suggests a deeper concern with *mecha* than with Frankenstein imagery on the part of director Harada.

In the current format, in which the dialogue is dubbed into American English, the reactivated Gunhed actively engages in conversation with Brooklyn. While this feat is convincingly accomplished by voice-over without any visible lip-synch, Gunhed's unintentionally hilarious lines undermine any possibility of the film ever taking itself seriously.

Harada's main intent is simply to entertain; he piles every device he can steal or invent onto a silly, impossibly complex plot. The prime live-action inspiration comes from James Cameron, whose *Aliens* furnishes numerous elements, while *The Terminator's* opening robot war is rerouted by way of superb Toho Studios model work. The home-grown *mecha* phenomenon is celebrated in Gunhed himself, his conventional tank appearance capable of turning as required into a fighting machine with arms and legs. *Mecha* in *anime* films readily achieves effects of impossible physical versatility at comparatively low cost. But aside from some of the computer graphics, this live action *mecha* remains sluggish compared with its animated counterpart, making it a curious choice for theatrical release.

Jeremy Clarke

The House of the Spirits

Germany/Denmark/Portugal 1993

Director: Bille August

Certificate	15	Music Performed by	Philharmonic Film Orchestra Munich
Distributor	Entertainment	Music Arrangements	Hans Zimmer
Production Company	Neue Constantin Film production	Orchestrations	Nick Glennie-Smith
	In association with Spring Creek productions/House of the Spirits Film/Costa do Castelo Filmes	Music Consultant	George Naschke
Executive Producers	Edwin Leicht Paula Weinstein Mark Rosenberg	Songs	"La Paloma" by Sebastian De Yradier, Michael Jary, performed by Rosita Serrano; "La Comparista" by Marcos Rodriguez, performed by Adalbert Lutter and his Orchestra
Producer	Bernd Eichinger	Costume Design	Barbara Baum
Co-producer	Martin Moszkowicz	Wardrobe Supervisor	Michael O'Connor
Line Producer	Thomas Lydholm	Make-up/Hair Supervisor	Geraldine Kunz
Production Executives	Dieter Meyer	Make-up Effects	Horst Stadlinger
	US: Rosanne Korenberg	TitleDesign	Sickert
Production Co-ordinators	Karin Trolle Else Schwarzwald	Supervising Sound Editor	Niels Avild
Production Managers	Marianne Christensen Portugal: Antónia Seabra	Sound Editor	Evi Claudins
Unit Manager	Jaime Campos	Foley Artists	Joo Fürst Andi Schneider
Location Manager	Janne Glessel	Stunt Co-ordinator	Miguel Fredecosa
Post-production Manager	Stephanie Hörmann	Stunts	Nathalie Guijaro Alvaro Quiroga José M. Serrano
Production Consultant	Stuart Lyons	Armourer	Robert Partridge
Casting	Billy Hopkins Suzanne Smith Consultant: Robert Kluzer London: Michelle Guish Munich: Risakes LA: Kelly Barden NY: Anne Goulder	Cast	Jeremy Irons Esteban Trueba Meryl Streep Clara Glenn Close Ferula Winona Ryder Blanca Antonio Banderas Pedro Vanessa Redgrave Nivea Maria Conchita Alonso Transito Armin Mueller-Stahl Severo Jan Niklas Satigny Sarita Choudhury Pancha Antnio Assumição Man at Cattle Market Julie Balloo Young Lady Frank Baker Intelligence Officer João Cabral Miguel Guilherme José Mora Ramos Victor Rocha Soldiers Carlos César Alexandre de Sousa Drivers Rogérjo Claro Man in Club
Assistant Directors	Guy Travers Tim Lewis John Duthie Portugal: Sérgio Carlos Raul Correia Jorge Quelroga		
Screenplay	Bille August Based on the novel by Isabel Allende		
Director of Photography	Jörgen Persson Panavision In colour		
2nd Unit Director of Photography/Camera Operator	Anette Haellock		
Matte Artist	Cinematic Film Effects Thorsten Binte		
Editor	Janus Billeskov Jansen		
Production Designer	Anna Asp		
Art Director	Augusto Mayer		
Set Decorator	Søren Gam		
Draughtsperson	Lone Malmsten		
Special Effects Supervisor	David Harris		
Music	Hans Zimmer		
Music Director	Fiachra Trench		

Edith Clement	Steve Mason
Midwife	Maestro
Miriam Colon	Jean Michael
Nun	Musician
Oscar A. Colon	LuisPinhão
Sheriff	Woodcarver
Franco Diogent	Teri Polo
Man at Party	Rosa
PedroEffe	Vivianna Reis
Immigration Officer	Indian Girl
Fran Fullenwider	Carlos Rodrigues
Emer Trueba	Postman
Vincent Gallo	Manuela Santos
Esteban Garcia	Saleswoman
Jane Gray	Joost Stedhoff
Young Clara	Father Antonio
SashaHanau	Hellmuth O. Stuken
Alba	TV General
Denys Hawthorne	Hannah Taylor-Gordon
Politician	Clara as a child
Frank Lenart	Jaime Tirelli
Interviewer	Oliver
Lone Lindorff	Martin Umbach
Maid	TV Reporter
Josh Maguire	Hans Wyprächtiger
Pedro as a child	Dr Caevus
Joaquin Martinez	
Segrado	
	12,439 feet
	138 minutes

Chile, 1973. A young woman, Blanca, drives her elderly father, Esteban Trueba, to a deserted hacienda. In voice-over, she recalls her late mother Clara, and the film flashes back to Clara's childhood. While her parents and sister Rosa entertain Rosa's beau Esteban, Clara exerts magic powers. Meanwhile, her father Severo has been made mayor. At the celebrations, Clara foresees a death in the family and Rosa dies from poison. Clara blames herself and stops speaking. Esteban, who has been working in the gold mines to earn money to marry Rosa, returns wealthier. His dour sister Ferula, who looks after their invalid mother, begs him to stay, but he leaves to set up a hacienda in the hills. Working himself and his workers hard, he is soon rich.

One day, Esteban rapes one of his women workers, Pancha. On another occasion, he lends money to an ambitious prostitute, Transito. Returning to town, he catches sight of Clara and woos her; agreeing to marry him, she starts to speak again. Ferula comes to live on the hacienda and the two women become friends, although Esteban is cruel to Ferula. Clara becomes pregnant and foresees her parents' death in a car accident. She takes the police to the spot where her mother's head has been torn from her body. Esteban, meanwhile, is becoming an important right-wing political figure. Clara gives birth to a girl, Blanca. One day, Pancha comes to the hacienda with a son she claims is Esteban's. He gives her money and sends her away. Later, Esteban Jr creeps into the house and starts to molest Blanca but is disturbed by Ferula's arrival.

When Blanca becomes friendly with the hacienda foreman's son, Pedro, Esteban sends her off to school. However, she and Pedro eventually become lovers. After an earthquake, Esteban rushes home to find Ferula sleeping with her arms around Clara. In a rage, he throws his sister out of the house. When Pedro rallies his fellow workers about fair pay and conditions, Esteban has him whipped and sent away. One night, Ferula's ghost walks through the door, and Clara correctly announces her death. Esteban ►

◀ invites a French count, whom he considers a possible husband for Blanca. The count, seeing Blanca slip off to meet Pedro, tells Esteban. He drags her home and beats her and Clara, who has come to her defense. Clara vows never to speak to him. Blanca discovers that she is pregnant, and mother and daughter leave for their home in the town. Esteban drags the count there to force him to marry Blanca but she refuses him.

Esteban puts a price on Pedro's head. Led by Esteban Jr, he finds him but the young man escapes him. Esteban rises through the political ranks, but his life is empty and he goes to beg Clara's forgiveness. They live together again and he accepts his granddaughter Alba, though Clara will speak to him only through an intermediary. At Alba's birthday party, Esteban Jr turns up and asks for money to join the army. In the election, Esteban loses and Pedro's party, the People's Front, wins. Pedro meets his daughter. At Christmas, Esteban and Blanca are out shopping when Clara falls ill. As she dies, she asks Alba to give her diaries to Blanca. After a military coup takes place, Pedro hides in the Trueba house. The police arrest Blanca who asks her shocked father to help Pedro escape. Blanca is tortured over Pedro's whereabouts by Esteban Jr and sees her mother's ghost. Realising that he has been wrong about so much, Esteban smuggles Pedro into the Canadian embassy. Eventually, with the help of the now-influential Transito, Blanca is released. They leave the town house and drive back up to the hacienda, where Esteban dies after Clara comes to him in a vision.

● Worried that it would be trivialised by Hollywood, Isabel Allende held firmly onto her best-selling novel *The House of the Spirits*, seeing off all prospective movie offers. She only relented when Bille August proved to her how seriously he took it. Indeed, like August's other films, this is the proverbial 'serious movie with a touch of the epic'. That would be fine but for the fact that Allende's novel is less of a weighty epic than a romantic soap opera told with an engagingly deft touch, painted against a background of rather crudely drawn politics and sprinkled with a sweep of magic realism borrowed from other Latin American writers.

But epic is how August would have it. He treats us to big wide shots of workers building, growing and fetching on Esteban's hacienda; to tanks rolling into towns, scattering crowds of bystanders; and – always important – to lavish use of make-up effects as the characters age. Jeremy Irons is pretty convincing as the tanned, youthful Esteban, but by the time he has turned into an old man, it is the quantity of padding in his mouth that arouses most interest.

Epic movies usually demand big names, and this one does its duty in that respect. Unfortunately, that only proves that it doesn't matter who is on screen if other factors work against



Chile comfortfarm: Close, Streep

them. Here, the prime culprit is the music. Hans Zimmer's score drowns out any feeling the actors might be hoping to bring to the scene. It doesn't take long to work out the code – syrupy violins for impending love, urgent poundings for impending disaster – and even less time to find its clichés tiresome. Streep and Irons, as the youngish Clara and Esteban, manage a few convincing moments in depicting their passionate lifelong love affair but the music gets them in the end.

Although August would have us find this all overtly serious, the film simply comes across as stodgy. It deals with the simplistic politics with a faithful but heavy hand, giving a textbook impression of good versus bad, and leaving a space where the human involvement should be. The forbidden passion between Blanca and Pedro is a very sparkless affair, and the potential sexual tensions between Blanca's relationships with Pedro and with her sadistic, twisted half-brother Esteban are left unexplored.

Allende's central theme – that women are positive forces for change who have to drag reactionary, ignorant men into the present – has not been lost, but the focus does appear to have shifted. Streep's Clara is a fey Christmas-tree fairy, while Ryder's Blanca is so strenuously earnest that it is hard to engage with her. Consequently, Irons' Esteban dominates. Because he is viewed largely through his different relationships with different women, he is allowed a multi-faceted existence that those women lack. The exception is the film's one really strong performance, Glenn Close's Ferula. Initially played almost as a caricature, she reveals a capacity for love, guilt, repression and fantasy that provide a dimension of conflict lacking in the wiser Clara and Blanca.

The tricky, mystical, magic-realist elements are another hazard. Perhaps recognising that he is no Raul Ruiz or Ruy Guerra, who might delight in these as an end in themselves, August plays down the supernatural occurrences, simply allowing the odd squawk of a sixth sense from the coyly ethereal Streep, or the glimpse of a ghostly appearance. This is a wise move in some ways but, given the way the film works, it also leads the narrative to the wrong side of pedestrian. Echoing the title of August's own previous film, *The House of the Spirits* comes with the best of intentions. But goodwill alone cannot make it sparkle.

Amanda Lipman

The Joy Luck Club

USA 1993

Director: Wayne Wang

Certificate 15	by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Distributor Buena Vista	Orchestrations Rachel Portman
Production Company Buena Vista Pictures	Music Supervisor Stephan R. Goldman
In association with Hollywood Pictures	Music Editor Bill Abbott
Executive Producers Oliver Stone	Songs "I Enjoy Being a Girl" by Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein II; "The Monkees' Theme" by Tommy Boyce, Bobby Hart, performed by The Monkees; "One Fine Day" by Gerry Goffin, Carole King, performed by The Chiffons; "He Ri Jun Zai Lai (When Will You Come Again?)" by Yao Ming; "Ye Lai Xiang (Scent of the Night)" by Lee Lai Kwang, James Wong; "Gamethon" by and performed by Michael A. Lang
Producers Wayne Wang	Choreography Michael Smuin
Associate Producer Jessinta Liu Fung Ping	Costume Design Lydia Tanji
Production Supervisor Carole Fontana	Supervisor Francey Grace
Production Co-ordinators Maxine E. Garcia	Casting Heidi Levitt
China: Karen Hughes	Costume Supervisor Barbara Kassal
Production Managers Diane B. Smith	Wardrobe Supervisor Marjorie K. Chan
China: Chu Liang Xu	Make-up Artists Valli O'Reilly
Unit Production Manager Carole Fontana	China: Guo Fang Ma
Location Manager Jonathan Shedd	Hairstylists Terry Baliei
Post-production Supervisor Francey Grace	China: Midy Yuan
Assistant Directors Josh King	Title Design R/Greenberg Associates
Marcei A. Brubaker	West, Inc.
Matias Alvarez	Sound Design Tim Chau
China: Kong Hon (Cub) Chien	Dialogue Editors Bobby Mackston
De Gen Yang	ADR Supervisor Devon Curry
Screenplay Amy Tan	ADR Editor Eileen Horta
Ronald Bass	Foley Editor Tony Capelli
Based on the novel by Amy Tan	Sound Recordists Curtis Choy
Director of Photography Amir Mokri	Music: John Richards
Colour Technicolor	Joel Moss
B Camera Operator Michael Chin	ADR Recordist Charleen Richards
Video Playback Operator Kenn Kashima	Foley Recordist Jim Ashwell
Editor Maysie Hoy	Dolby stereo
Production Designer Donald Graham Burt	Sound Re-recordists Matthew Iadarola
Art Directors Diana Kunc	Gary Gegan
China: Kwan Kit (Eddy) Kwok	Sound Effects Editors Rick Franklin
Jian Jun Li	Albert Gasser
Art Department Co-ordinator Angela D. Chou	Bill Angarola
Set Decorator Jim Poynter	Foley Artists Dan O'Connell
Scenic Artist Elizabeth Tullis	Gary Hecker
Special Effects Co-ordinator Frank W. Tarantino	Technical Adviser Mishka Chen
Special Effects Yong Long Lou	Consultants Cultural:
Music Rachel Portman	Peggy Ling
Music Director J.A.C. Redford	Sandy Fu Chin
Music Extracts "Humoresques" by Antonín Dvorak; "Flute and Harp Concerto in C, K299 (Andantino)"	Chinese Culinary: Vivian Chiang
	Hong Kong: Joseph Kung Shing Chow

Cast KieuChinh Suyuan	Nicholas Guest Hairdresser
Tsai Chin Lindo	Kim Chew Mrs Chew
FranceNuyen YingYing	Jason Yee Waverly's Brother
Lisa Lu An Mei	Ya ShanWu Lindo's Husband
Ming-NaWen June	Samantha Haw Shoshana
Tamlyn Tomita Waverly	Yu Fei Hong Ying Ying, age 16-25
Lauren Tom Lena	Russell Wong Lin Xiao
Rosalind Chao Rose	Grace Chang Lin Xiao's Opera Singer
Chao-Li Chi June's Father	Michael Paul Chan Harold
Melanie Chang June, age 9	Phillip Moon Ken
VictorWong Old Chong	Melissa Tan Jennifer
Lisa Connolly Singing Girl	YiDing An Mei, age 9
VuMai Waverly, age 6-9	EmmyYu An Mei, age 4
YingWu Lindo, age 4	Vivian Wu An Mei's Mother
MeiJuanXi Lindo's Mother	Lucille Soong Popo
Guo-RongChen HuangTai Tai	You Ming Chong An Mei's Uncle
Hsu YingLi Matchmaker	FenTian Lena Zhou
IreneNg Lindo, age 15	Jeanie Lee Wu Aunties
Qugen Cao Lindo's Father	Andrew McCarthy Ted
Anle Wang YanLu	Jack Ford Mr Jordan
Lindo's Brother	Diane Baker Mrs Jordan
Boffeng Liang Pedicab Driver	TianMingWu Wu Tsing
William Gong Tyan Yu	Elizabeth Sung Second Wife
Diana C. Weng Lindo's Servant	EvaShen An Mei's Nanny
Yuan-Ho C. Koo Matchmaker's Friend	Sheng YuMa Sheng Wei Ma
Zhi Xiang Xia Huang Tai Tai Servant	Suyuan's Twin Daughters
DanYi Servant's Boyfriend	12,507 feet
Christopher Rich Rich	139 minutes

● A bon voyage party is held for June, a young Chinese-American woman about to visit China to meet her long lost half-sisters, the daughters of her recently deceased mother, Suyuan. Scenes from the party are intercut with long flashbacks to episodes in the lives of June, her mother, her mother's three friends Lindo, Ying Ying and An Mei, and their respective daughters Waverly, Lena, and Rose.

The first flashback shows June as a child, giving a piano recital at which she performs badly, providing the genesis for her feelings of inadequacy in the face of her mother's expectations for her. Like their mothers, June and Waverly have a lifelong rivalrous friendship that resurfaces later in life. Another sequence reveals that Suyuan had to abandon her twin baby girls, June's half-sisters, during the war.

The next twinned pair of flashbacks concerns Lindo and Waverly. Lindo's story reveals how she was forced into an arranged marriage in China that she managed to escape through the clever ploy of invoking ancestral warnings. Waverly had been a chess prodigy as a child. As an adult, she struggles to get her mother to accept her independence, symbolised by her marriage to a Caucasian man. In the third pair of flashbacks. Ying Ying's unhappy marriage in China, which ended with her drowning her own son, is contrasted

with her daughter Lena's sterile marriage to an affluent architect. Ying Ying helps Lena become strong enough to leave her marriage and find happiness with a new man.

An Mei, whose concubine mother committed suicide so that An Mei might have a more secure position in the extended family, is compared to her daughter Rose, whose marriage withers because of Rose's passivity. The marriage is shown to have been saved by Rose learning to be more assertive through guidance from her mother. At last, a more extended version of Suyuan's story is shown, explaining the terrible hardships she endured escaping Kweilin during the Japanese invasion, and why she abandoned her babies in the hope that they might be found by someone more capable of caring for them. Bearing presents and mementos of her mother, June goes to China where she meets her now middle-aged sisters and promises to tell them all about their mother, who they feel is still with them in spirit.

The cliched opinion with which Westerners often malign Chinese food is that no matter how much you eat, you never feel completely full. This slander isn't always true in culinary terms, but the analogy seems apt in the case of *The Joy Luck Club*. It's a rich, multi-course movie, with plenty of tasty bits, but by the end its sweet and sour sentimentality becomes a little cloying, and you find yourself still yearning for something a little more substantial on the end of your chopsticks.

Part of the problem is that Amy Tan's novel, on which it is faithfully based, though often quite likable, is not that meaty a work to begin with. The fascination induced by the stories of the mothers' lives in China is dulled by the rather more banal tales of the daughters' American lives. The prose style's mix of Sino-accented narration and self-help group confession tends towards monotony, despite efforts to create a sense of multi-accented diversity. The same dilemma afflicts the film. The Chinese sequences tend to form a homogenous tapestry of brightly-coloured suffering, while the American sections, though more visually differentiated, end up sometimes seeming like scenes from an uneventful soap opera. Tan collaborated closely on the screenplay and so must be held partly responsible both for sharpening the dialogue and for cranking up the melodrama in some of the stories. Though the use of voice-over narration is generally effective, some passages incorporated verbatim from the book – like a metaphor which likens family patterns to a flight of stairs – sound painfully literary when spoken. In fact, it should have been faced that it was a little trite the first time round.

The intricate emotional tugs-of-war between mothers and daughters would be a challenge to any film-maker, and given the ethnic profile of the film, Wayne Wang is probably better qualified than anyone else to meet it.

His previous work, including *Dim Sum*, *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, and *Life is Cheap... But Toilet Paper is Expensive* has displayed an acute sensitivity to character and the subtleties of Chinese, American and Chinese-American cultures, shot through with a wry sense of humour. Backed this time with big bucks from Oliver Stone and Walt Disney, his unique style is muffled in favour of a glossy, mainstream aesthetic that's always highly competent, if not a little bland. Still, small quirky touches shine through, like a split-second shot of Wang regular Victor Wong and a minor character asleep during a fiery argument at a dinner table, or the bouncy exuberance of the scene where Lindo, bursting with pride, carries a copy of *Life* magazine with Lena's face on the cover down the street so that everyone can see it. In light of the breadth of material, Wang keeps things ticking along very nicely.

Considering how few movies with almost all-Asian casts have been made in the US, perhaps one ought to be more grateful to *The Joy Luck Club* for breaking the ground with such an accessible story. It has also provided an opportunity for an impressive roster of women actors to do more complex roles than the usual sort of parts written for Asians. A droll mention of 'racist movies' like *The World of Susie Wong* – in which Tsai Chin, Lisa Lu, and France Nuyen have all performed in the past – is a reminder of how much the representation of Asian women has progressed since the 50s. This, as well as Oliver Stone's own *Heaven & Earth*, has provided some modest reward for whole careers spent largely as walk-on washerwomen, Liat in *South Pacific*, and extras in *M*A*S*H*. The strength of the performances, especially Tsai Chin's, ameliorates many of the film's faults as a whole. Though a slight debt to Chinese film-makers like Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige is felt in the texture of the cinematography, at heart *The Joy Luck Club* remains an old-fashioned Hollywood woman's picture, the kind I'd go see with my mother and a big box of hankies.

Leslie Felperin Sharman



Club together: Tsai Chin, Tamlyn Tomita

Kalifornia

USA 1993

Director: Dominic Sena

Certificate 18	Scenic Artist Ann Stacy
Distributor Rank	Storyboard Artist Mike Swift
Production Company A Propaganda Films production PolyGram Filmed Entertainment In association with Viacom Pictures	Special Effects Special Effects Unlimited Michael Schorr Jeff Knott
Executive Producers Jim Kouf Lynn Bigelow	Music Carter Burwell
Executive in Charge of Production Tim Clawson	Music Extract "Symphony No. B in F major Op. 93" by Ludwig van Beethoven
Producers Steve Golin Sigurjon Sighvatsson Aristides McGarry	Music performed by Guitar: David Torn Bass: Erik Norse Sanko
Co-producers Kristine J. Schwarz Mitch Sacharoff	Keyboards: Carter Burwell
Line Producer Gregory Goodman	Percussion: Geoffrey Gordon
Production Associate Jonathan Wiedemann	Hearn Gadbois
Production Supervisor Harold F. Enright	Music Editor Adam Smalley
Production Co-ordinator Michelle Colbert	Music Co-ordinator Adam Smalley
Head of Production Tim Clawson	Music Consultant Sharon Boyle
Location Managers Augustus G. Kirk	Songs "Look Up to the Sky", "I Love the World" by Angelique Blanca, performed by The Indians; "Deep" by Anthony Michael Mortimer, performed by East 17; "No One Said it Would Be Easy" by Sheryl Crow, Bill Bottrell, Kevin Gilbert, Dan Schwartz, "Are You Strong Enough" by Sheryl Crow, David Ricketts, Kevin Gilbert, Bill Bottrell, David Baerwald, Brian Macleod, performed by Sheryl Crow; "Born for Love" by and performed by David Baerwald; "Do You Need Some?" by Matt Mercado, performed by Mind Bomb; "Unfulfilled" by and performed by Quicksand; "When You Come Back" by Kevin Kinney, Tim Nielson, Jeff Sullivan, Buren Fowler, performed by Drivin' n' Cryin'; "89 Lines" by Tina Harris, Daniel O'Brien, performed by Daniel O'Brien; "Playin' in the Dirt" by Doug Amy, Robert Cray, performed by Heather Myles; "Seven Days" by and performed by Hugh Harris; "Lettuce and Vodka" by Exene Cervenka, John Doe, Duke McVinnie, performed by X; "Come Home" by David Thomas, Jim Jones, Tony Maimone, Scott Krauss, performed by Pere Ubu; "(Get Your Kicks on) Route 66" by Bob Troup, performed by Asleep at the Wheel; "Dive Bomber" by Sean Dickson, performed by the Soup Dragons; "Accelerator" by Andrew Cairns, Eyfe Ewing, Michael McKeegan, performed by Therapy?; "Freebird"

by Allen Collins,
Ronnie van Zant

Costume Design
Kelle Kutsugeras

Wardrobe Supervisor
Dina Laquaglia

Key Make-up
Michelle Buehler

Special Make-up Effects
Thom Surprehant

Atlanta:
Andre Freitas

Hairstylists
Key:
Barbara Olvera

Atlanta:
Beatrice D'Alba

Titles/Opticals
Howard A. Anderson Company

Supervising Sound Editor
Paul Clay

Sound Editors
Mike Szakmeister
Jeff Sandler
Ed Barton
Susan Kurtz
Carin Rogers
Cameron Frankley
Martin Stein

ADR Editor
Pat Somerset

Sound Recordists
Jose Antonio Garcia

ADR Recordist
J.R. Western

Foley Recordists
Bruce Bell
Marilyn Graf
Dean St. John
Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists
Patrick Kirkbride
Cyccone
Robert Thirwell
Douglas Kerns
Tom Steel

Foley Artists
Ellen Heuer
Kevin Bartnof

Stunt Co-ordinator
Dan Bradley

Stunts
Richard Blackwell
Dan Bradley
Scott Cook
Edward Ellis
Robert "Dale" Gibson

Maria Kelly
Randi Layne
Suzanne Ranpe
Mike Schorr
Jim Stephan
Patricia Tallman

Cast
Brad Pitt
Early Grayce
Juliette Lewis
Adele Corners
David Duchovny
Brian Kessler
Michelle Forbes
Carrie Laughlin
Sierra Pecheur
Mrs Musgrave
Gregory Mars Martin
Walter Livesy
David Milford
Driver
Marisa Raper
Little Girl
Catherine Larson
Teenage Girl
Bill Crabbe
Middle-aged Farmer
Loanne Bishop
Ron Kuhlman
Officers
Brett Rice
Police Officer
Sarah Sullivan
Bar Waitress
Patricia Sill
Carol
J. Michael McDougal
John Diebold
Tommy Chappelle
Old Man
Judson Vaughn
Parole Officer
David Rose
Eric
John Dullaghan
Mr Musgrave
Eric Stenson
Young Cracker
Mary Ann Hagan
Waitress
Patricia Hunte
Newscaster

10,623 feet
118 minutes

Writer Brian Kessler needs to honour a book contract and decides to undertake a voyage through several southern states of the USA, visiting infamous murder sites along the way. Accompanied by his girlfriend Carrie Laughlin, an unsuccessful art photographer, he intends to compile his written impressions with her images to produce the manuscript. In this way they hope to break out of their unfulfilling lifestyle and head for California. To finance the journey, they advertise for a ride-share and pick up Early Grayce and his girlfriend Adele Corners. Unknown to the other three, Early, on parole for other crimes, is an amoral killer fleeing after the recent murder of his landlord.

At the first of the murder sites, the new tenants of the house that Brian wants to visit refuse him entry, while Early steals a bag from the house. Carrie's misgivings about Early mount after Adele tells her that he beats her, when he savagely cuts Adele's hair in a messy approximation of Carrie's own bob, and when he begins to express a sexual interest in Carrie. At the next gas station, short of money, Early stabs a customer to death out of view of the others. Stopping at a motel, Early and Brian go out to play pool while Carrie stays in with Adele to fix her haircut. At the pool hall, Brian is harassed ►



Uneasy riders: Forbes, Pitt, Lewis, Duchovny

◀ by an aggressive customer, whom Early sees off with a brutal beating. Back at the motel, Adele tells Carrie how she was gang-raped at the age of 13 and that her relationship with Early now makes her feel secure.

At the next murder site, Early gives Brian a lesson in gunmanship, much to Carrie's disgust. At another site, while exploring inside, Carrie and Brian argue. Storming out, Carrie observes Early and Adele in the car having sex and photographs them from a distance; Early notices her, smiles and carries on. At the next service station, Carrie sees a TV broadcast declaring Early to be a wanted criminal; when Early realises this he threatens her, intimidating her by torturing, then killing the attendant. Stopping at the next site, a disused mine-shaft, they are disturbed by the police. Early kills one of the officers, injures the other and attempts to make Brian kill the injured officer. Brian refuses, so Early finishes him off himself.

Early imprisons Carrie and Brian at the next house they stop at, and kills the elderly husband of the house. When Adele helps his widow escape, he kills her. With Adele dead, Early takes off with Carrie. Brian tracks them to an abandoned house on a former nuclear test-site and, after a battle with Early, kills him and escapes with Carrie. They make it to California and move into a beachfront house.

● In the light of *Kalifornia*, Jean-Luc Godard's recipe for film-making as being "a girl, a car and a gun" now calls for one crucial extra ingredient: a primer in Cultural Studies. Dominic Sena loads up his road-movie star vehicle so visibly with all the extra baggage that the genre is these days expected to deal with – identity politics, issues of sexuality and class – that its narrative motor can only splutter along under the weight. Not that Brad Pitt doesn't put in a show-stopping performance as Early Grayce, the killbilly hick from hell, with an accent as thick as a mouthful of chewing tobacco and body language straight from *A Streetcar Named Desire* Brando.

But that is precisely one of the film's major problems – it is such an over-the-top performance that Early simply dominates the film and its other characters, making them little more than fellow passengers caught in his murderous tail-spin. At least in *Wild at*

Heart, one of *Kalifornia*'s generic cousins, David Lynch gave his characters a kind of cartoon equality and dialogue that could have been sitting in balloons above their heads. Likewise, in *Reservoir Dogs*, Quentin Tarantino delivered dialogues whose geeky insistence on repetition and detail took them straight back to a sense of the everyday absurd. In *Kalifornia*, however, the dialogues and by extension the characters – except for Early, who doesn't so much speak as slobber eloquently – do not really go in either direction. Instead, a voice-over appears to serve the numerous functions of being simultaneously a homage to Terrence Malick, adding a writerly textual density and most nauseating of all, providing an Olympian moral perspective on matters of Good and Evil.

One of the reasons that *Reservoir Dogs* was dragged so often through the talk-show mud was because of its refusal to go for this easy option on violence, moral responsibility and point-of-view in film; it preferred to provide multiple point-of-view and hence a complex perspective. Not so *Kalifornia* which culminates in Brian's sanctimonious 'them and us' discriminations by the time he and Carrie have reached the safety of their Californian hideaway. So much for the socially-conscious baggage; the film travels from liberal bad faith to Darwinian natural law with precious little pathos en route.

Stylistically, Sena can handle two registers of images, both of which he employs to the fullest extent – the insouciance of lifestyle-chic ads, where the camera prowls low through loft apartments just to make absolutely sure that none of that gorgeous diffused lighting goes missing in the shot; and the kinetic enthusiasm of the rock-video register that shows up, predictably, during sequences involving speeding cars and fighting. These approaches provide a sheen that serves to distract from the emptiness of the characters. But Brian and Carrie, Early and Adele go no further than being unsuccessful second-degree embodiments of ideas about the recto and verso of the serial killer: the real thing and its victim (Pitt and Lewis), and the media-encouraged rapacious voyeurism that pursues it, taking shape in word (Duchovny) and image (Forbes). Readers of *The Modern Review* will love this movie.

Chris Darke

Man's Best Friend

USA 1993

Director: John Lafia

Certificate

15

Distributor

Guild

Production Company

New Line Cinema productions present
A Roven-Cavello Entertainment production

Executive Producers

Daniel Grodnik
Robert Kosberg
Executive in Charge of Production
Cindy Hornickel

Producer

Bob Engelman

Associate Producer

Kelley Smith

Production Controller

Paul Prokop

Production Co-ordinator

Anne E. Hart

Unit Production Manager

Bob Engelman

Location Manager

Steven Shkolnik

Executive-in-charge of Post-production

Joe Fineman

Post-production Supervisor

Ric Keeley

Casting

Valorie Massalas

Assistant Directors

Benita Allen

Jeff E. Rafner

David Spitzer

Screenplay

John Lafia

Director of Photography

Mark Irwin

Colour

DeLuxe

Prints by:

Film House

Animation Photography

Joseph Thomas

B Camera Operator

Scott E. Steele

Video Playback

Steve Irwin

Digital Visual Effects

Composite Image Systems

Visual Effects

Executive Producer:

Steve Rundell

Producer:

C. Marie Davis

Co-ordinator:

Dawn Guinta

Scan/Composite

Andy Mumford

Opticals

Title House Inc.

Supervisor:

Beverly Bernacki

Computer Graphics

Paul Conti

Supervisor:

Joni Jacobson

Animation Supervisor

Clint Colver

Editors

Michael N. Kune

Film:

Nancy Frazen

Production Designer

Jaymes Hinkle

Art Director

Erik Olson

Art Department

Co-ordinator

Jonathan Josell

Set Design

Sharon E. Alshams

Set Decorator

Ellen Totleben

Set Dresser

Anna Czerwatiuk

Storyboard Artist

David Lux

Special Effects Supervisor

Frank Ceglia

Chameleon Effect

Available Light Ltd

Puppeteers

Janna Leann Crawford

Thomas Floutz

Erik Schaper

Russell Shinkle

David Stinnett

N. Brock Winkless IV

Music

Joel Goldsmith

Orchestrations

Alex Wilkinson

Nick Vidar

Music Co-ordinator

Marita Goldsmith

Songs

"Puppy Love" by Paul

Anka, performed by

Marty Blasick;

"Cocomotion" by

Michael Lewis, Laurin

Rinder, Merria Ross,

performed by El Coco

Costume Design

Beverly Hong

Costume Supervisor

Michelle Jade Lee

Key Make-up/Hair

Suzanne Parker

Sanders

Special Make-up Effects

Kevin Yagher

Artist:

Mitchell J. Coughlin

Title Design

Deborah Ross Film

Design

Sound Design

Harry Cohen

Supervising Sound Editor

Steven Williams

Sound Editors

Cathie Speakman

Jim Brookshire

ADR

Supervisor:

Craig Clark

Editor:

Lew Goldstein

Sound Recordists

Steve Nelson

Music:

Alex Wilkinson

Heather Forsyth

Foley Recordist

Brian Geer

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Ken Teaney

William Freesh

Sound Effects Editors

Ann Scibelli

Lew Goldstein

David Farmer

Foley Artists

Vince Nicastro

Greg Barbanell

Bess Hopper

Special Vocal Effects

Frank Welker

Stunt Co-ordinator

Rick Barker

Stunts

Rick Barker

Bob Black

Simone Boiseree

Martin Bresin

John Caan

Frank Ceglia

Scott Cook

Jake Crawford

Everett Creach

David Deleissegues

Justin DeRosa

Kiante Elam

Glory Fioramonti

Mike Johnson

Donna Keegan

Clint Lilley

Jack Lilley

Mike McGaughy

Brian Joseph Moore

Bobby M. Porter

Debby Lynn Ross

Clint Rowe

Scott Rowe

Jerry Wills

Dan Wynands

Max's Behaviour

Clint Rowe

Animal Trainers

Max:

Clint Rowe

Scott Rowe

David Deleissegues

Frank Schmidt

Heidi/Spike/Boo:

Steve Berens

Keith Bauer

Cast

Ally Sheedy

Lori Tanner

Lance Henriksen

Doctor Jarret

Robert Costanzo

Detective Kovaca

John Cassini

Detective Bendetti

Fredric Lehne

Perry

Trula M. Marcus

Annie

J.D. Daniels

Rudy

William Sanderson

Ray

Robin Frates

Judy Sanders

Rick Barker

Mailman

Bradley Pierce

Chet

Robert Arentz

EMAX Security Guard

Cameron Arnett

Adam Carl

Dog Catchers

Tom Rosales Jr

Mugger

Ray Lykins

KCBG Security Guard

Mickey Cassidy

Paperboy

L.E. Moko

Mobile Mechanic

Caroline Cornell

KCBG Receptionist

Del Zamora

Rudy's Dad

Arlen Stuart

Mrs Barclay

Frank Cavestani

Policeman

Paul Heyes

Mechanic

Peter Georges

Truck Driver

Olivia Brown

Lab Assistant

Lisa Cavallo

Friday

7,874 feet

87 minutes

● San Remo. Reporter Lori Tanner, determined to broaden her scope outside her usual fluff items, is investigating a story connecting the EMAX Research Laboratory to the violation of animal rights. But before she can meet up with her technician contact, the technician is savagely killed by one of the EMAX animals which has got loose. Tanner and her camerawoman Annie enter EMAX on their own initiative and start filming the caged and mutilated animals. In the Special Projects room they discover rare species and a St Bernard, Max, which escapes as they try to film it. Tanner and Annie are discovered by EMAX chief Dr Jarret but they escape, pursued by Max, who later saves them from a car park mugger.

Unwilling to return Max, Tanner lies about where he comes from, and her boyfriend Perry reluctantly agrees to let her keep him. Max seems to have established a strong rapport with his new owner and obeys all her commands. Max is already showing evidence of uncanny intelligence; later, at the police station, Jarret explains to the two cops assigned to the case that Max, highly trained as a guard dog, could be extremely dangerous in the wrong hands. Max has been bred using DNA from other species and has many un-canine characteristics including the ability to climb trees and camouflage himself. He has also been treated with a stabilising drug to curb his killer instinct which will soon wear off.

Max is settling in at Tanner's home and meeting the neighbours. He threatens the paper boy, eats the local tabby cat, 'rapes' Heidi, the female col-lie next door, 'murders' the mailman and hides his body. Things come to a head when Perry suspects Max of sabotaging the brakes on his car. The cops start taking the case seriously when they discover the mutilated body of the car park mugger. Meanwhile Jarret has traced Max to Tanner, so she places Max with a local scrapyard owner. But Max kills his cruel new owner and

heads back to Tanner's home where he urinates acid onto Perry's face and kills the two cops. Jarret kidnaps Tanner and uses her as bait to draw Max to the EMAX Laboratory. In the final showdown a now destabilised Max reaffirms his bonding with the injured Tanner but viciously attacks Jarret; Jarret and Max both die. Weeks later, restored to normality, Tanner is called in to see Heidi's pups. They all resemble their mother except for one...

● Pretty Ally Sheedy showed promise as part of the 80s brat-pack, playing well in ensemble pieces such as *The Breakfast Club* and *St Elmo's Fire*. But all that bright optimism and youth don't necessarily lead to stardom and when the cookie crumbles there just aren't enough good roles to go round – especially for the girls. So it is that Sheedy is seen in *Man's Best Friend* in an inconsequential routine role. However, she manages to be affecting and natural, especially in the scenes with the boyfriend, exploiting her 'girl-next-door' image to hold this film together. For *Man's Best Friend* doesn't know whether it's horror, sci-fi, drama or comedy. It's best seen as the latter, especially when the body count goes out of control and Max starts camouflaging himself as a toolbox. There are nevertheless some moments in awesomely bad taste, as when Max 'rapes' Heidi, the bitch-next-door, on her owners' bed – not funny!

Man's Best Friend might be fun to rent on video, although it's not nearly quirky enough for cult status. It plays with big themes, like the everyday becoming the menacing opposite of itself – as with the doll Chucky, in John Lafia's now-notorious *Child's Play 2* – or the animal rights issue, or a woman trying to break out of gender stereotyping. But it fails to engage with any of them in an interesting way. The characters are straight-from-TV, especially the goofy cops and the comic strip dog-catchers. The only spark is the parallel breakdown between dog and man, as Max and Jarret disintegrate together. But no moral conclusion is drawn and the film collapses into self-satire.

Cinematographer Mark Irwin has worked extensively with David Cronenberg, and while some of the opening shots of the EMAX lab briefly remind one of Cronenberg's cold urban landscapes, there's nothing here to compare with the stunning painterly photography of *The Dead Zone* and nothing as visceral as *Videodrome*. The opening credits are the best part of the film, a series of images of dogs in old paintings and etchings – friendly, loyal companions but also mad, diabolical animals. It's an effective, chilling opening, and unwittingly does raise the serious topical issue of dangerous dogs; but the moment passes. The issue is more profoundly treated in both the Stephen King adaptation *Cujo* and Sam Fuller's *White Dog*. In the end the problem with all dog films is that, however you look at it, if a dog can feel or think, then it just isn't a dog any more.

Jill McGreal

The Music of Chance

USA 1993

Director: Philip Haas

Certificate 15
Distributor Feature Film Company
Production Company I.R.S. Media
 In association with American Playhouse Theatrical Films
Executive Producers Miles Copeland III Paul Colichman
 Lindsay Law
Producers Frederick Zollo Dylan Sellers
Co-producer Kerry Orent
Production Executives Melissa Cobb Steven Reich
Production Supervisor Daniel Stroll
Production Co-ordinators Office: Anne Nevin NY: Beth Boyd
Production Manager Cecilia Kate Roque
Location Manager Jane Barrer
Casting Bonnie Timmermann North Carolina: Fincannon & Associates
Assistant Directors Greg Jacobs Allen Kupetsky
Screenplay Philip Haas Belinda Haas
 Based on the novel by Paul Auster
Director of Photography Bernard Zitzermann New York: Jean de Segonzac
Colour Technicolor
 prints by: Foto-Kem
Camera Operator Jean De Segonzac
Editor Belinda Haas
Production Designer Hugo Luczyc-Wyhowski
Art Director Ruth Ammon
Set Decorator Christina Belt
Set Dressers David Hack Stephen Damrel
Models Rebecca Fuller
Music Phillip Johnston
Music Extracts "Finale (Vivace)" from "The Lark" (String Quartet in D Major op.64 No.5)" by Franz Josef Haydn; "Cavatina" (from String Quartet Op.130), "Adagio Quasi un 'po andante" (from String Quartet Op. 131 No.6) by Ludwig van Beethoven; "Le Spectre de la rose" (from "Les Nuits d'été") by Hector Berlioz, "En Prière" by Gabriel Fauré, Stéphane Bordèse, performed by Wendy White
Music Performed by Piano (opera performances): Dan Saunders Saxophone: Allan Chase Electric Guitar: Stew Cutler Jody Harris

Banjo: Mark Dane
 Saxophone/Clarinet: Rob De Bellis Mike Sim
 Trumpet: Dave Douglas
 Talking Drum: Richard Dworkin
 Violin: Mark Feldman
 Piano: Joel Forrester
 Viola: Juliet Haffner
 Bass/Tuba: David Hofstra
 Cello: Beverly Lauridsen
 Drums/Vibes/ Percussion: Kevin Norton
 Piano/Hammond B3 Organ: Joe Ruddick
 First Violin: Laura Seaton
 Acoustic Guitar: Kevin Trainor
 Dobro: David Tronzo
Music Producer Andrew Capole
Songs "Mr Bradley Mr Martin" by Joel Forrester; "The Hymn of the Souls Who Are Passing", "Hofstra's Dilemma by Phillip Johnston
Costume Design Rudy Dillon
Key Make-up/Hair Gigi Williams
Make-up Effects Tony Ellwood
Title Design Drenttel Doyle Partners
Titles/Opticals The Effects House
Supervising Sound Editor Maurice Schell
Sound Recordists Les Lupin NY: Neil Danziger
 Music: Hugo Dwyer
ADR Recordists Michael Barry Tommy Goodwin
Foley Recordist George Lara
 Dolby stereo
Sound Effects Editor Paul P. Soucek
Foley Artist Brian Vancho
Stunts Don Hewitt Bill Aganos

Cast
 James Spader
 Jack Pozzi
 Mandy Patinkin
 James Nashe
 M. Emmet Walsh
 Calvin Murks
 Charles Durning
 Bill Flower
 Joel Grey
 Willie Stone
 Samantha Mathis
 Tiffany
 Christopher Penn
 Floyd
 Pearl Jones
 Louise
 Jordan Spainhour
 Floyd Jnr
 Paul Auster
 Driver

8,810 feet
97 minutes

● James Nashe, an ex-fireman whose wife has left him, seeks solace in the open road, bolstered by the unexpected legacy left him by his father. Heading for New York, he spies a lone figure by the roadside, apparently in difficulties, and offers him a lift. The wounded young man is Jack Pozzi, a professional card player and the victim of a police raid on a poker game where he stood, according to his story, to win a lot of money. Not only is that lost, he tells Nashe, but so is the chance of a lifetime to play an even bigger league game the following day, as he has lost every cent. Nashe takes him to New York, puts him up in a hotel and buys him a new suit of clothes, offering to lend him the money himself, in exchange for a stake in his eventual winnings.

The two men drive out to the antique-filled mansion of their opponents, millionaire accountants Bill Flower and Willie Stone. Some of Pozzi's confidence evaporates when he learns that since he last played them, the millionaires have been taking lessons from a legendary card player. In one of the mansion's rooms, Stone shows them his World City – a tabletop model in which he has represented every key event in the couple's lives from the moment they won the lottery which set them on the road to fabulous wealth. Stone tells them about his plan to build a model of the room which contains the model itself.

As the game proceeds, Pozzi at first appears to be on a winning streak. But on the way back from the bathroom, Nashe pays a visit to the World City and steals the figures of his hosts; from then on, Pozzi's fortunes go from bad to worse. To stave off ruin, Pozzi borrows Nashe's last hundred thousand dollars and finally stakes the car. That too is lost. Flower and Stone suggest a deal. They have shipped over a pile of 15,000 stones which they want to have made into a memorial wall, and suggest that Nashe and Pozzi work off their debt by building it. Nashe and Pozzi agree, and sign a contract. They are housed in a trailer on the site. Their overseer is Calvin Murks. They are allowed no contact with the out-

side world, apart from letters which Jack is allowed to send to his sister.

Gradually the work is completed and the two men are allowed a celebration which includes, at Pozzi's suggestion, the presence of a prostitute, Tiffany. Next morning, however, while Pozzi is still asleep, Calvin brings bad news. There is a further bill – for food. Desperate, Pozzi escapes from the estate; the next morning, Nashe discovers his mangled body outside the trailer. Calvin takes him to hospital. Alone, Nashe completes the job, overseen by Calvin's son Floyd and his grandson, who he believes tipped Calvin off about Pozzi's escape attempt. Calvin and Floyd suggest a celebratory drink on the town when the work is completed. Nashe warily agrees. He gets Floyd to relax his guard sufficiently to agree to his driving the car back, and engineers a crash from which he emerges wounded but alive. Staggering along the highway, he hails a passing motorist.

● *The Music of Chance* is director Philip Haas's first feature film. Previous work has been in the theatre and included a stint as assistant director at the RSC. He has also made a series of documentaries about artists, including one on David Hockney, and is reported as seeing this film continuing that particular line of enquiry. This history suggests a few reasons why he might have been drawn to Paul Auster's not at all unfilmable novel for all the wrong reasons.

Auster's work, especially *The New York Trilogy*, has been much praised as a touchstone of new American writing. In *The Music of Chance* Auster draws very much on a collective memory shaped by cinema, by pulp fiction and by the long shadows cast by memories of a *Picture Post*-style iconography. His superficially relaxed vernacular style masks material which is at once melodramatic and almost algebraically structured, full of echoes and mirror images. Haas, instead of embedding his film in the quite detailed personal accounts that his two protagonists give of their lives, chooses to prune away much of their personal history, ►



Hearts, diamonds, clubs and Spader

◀ leaving them a matter of anecdote or cutting them altogether. Pozzi’s detailed account of his paternal abandonment, which so closely matches Nashe’s own, vanishes. Nashe’s obsession with the road – potent in the book – is sidelined, talked about rather than experienced, despite its importance as a symbol of escape, freedom and the rejection of the domestic.

Haas evidently has no dreams of reworking films like *Kings of the Road* or even Monte Hellman’s *Two Lane Blacktop*, probably the most persuasive of existential road movies. Instead he homes in on the entrapment of his protagonists by Flower and Stone, and on the task they are given as a way of discharging their debt. Their project, the wall, is to have no utilitarian function. It is to be a “memorial in the shape of a wall”, something that would fit quite comfortably as a Turner Prize contender. On the page Auster is able to enmesh the wall’s construction in a web of recollections, observations and reflections, recounting the tale with a degree of irony and obliqueness. On the screen Haas finds himself with nowhere much to hide. The screen, particularly the Hollywood screen, has a tendency to mythologise the everyday – which is why the sequences on the road and at the card table cannot help but work. This is balanced by Hollywood’s countervailing tendency to literalise the symbolic.

The wall then becomes less a metaphor for the men’s ‘cementing’ their relationship than a matter of practical DIY curiosity. Haas also dwells on Flower and Stone’s model World City, which documents their lives from the moment they achieved wealth. He is intrigued especially by the need to depict within the model of the room in which the model stands – of course – another model and within that another, even more minutely scaled. This is the stuff of New Age metaphysical speculation, as is the ending (not in the book) in which Paul Auster himself is glimpsed driving the passing car that slows down for the wounded wayside figure, who this time is Nashe himself. Read against the realist drive of the narrative, this cannot but seem too inappropriately clever by half.

The mood of modish self-reflexiveness extends also to a shot of Nashe apparently reading from another of Auster’s works. Conventional narrative cinema does of course have ways of dealing with mystery, ambiguity and obsession, ways which Auster hints at in his book but with which Haas fails to engage. So, while the film pays attention to aesthetics and representation, Haas lets slip the opportunity to devise a persuasive and atmospheric directorial style. The exteriors are blandly shot, mere records of the action, while the mansion interiors appear to aspire to a Wellesian grandiosity. On the plus side, Haas’s tried and tested cast perform capably, and Spader turns in a notably vivacious performance as Pozzi.

Verina Glaessner

My Life

USA 1993

Director: Bruce Joel Rubin

Certificate
12
Distributor
Guild
Production Company
Zucker Brothers
Executive Producer
Gil Netter
Producers
Jerry Zucker
Bruce Joel Rubin
Hunt Lowry
Associate Producers
Kathryn J. McDermott
William M. Elvin
Production Supervisor
William A. Johnson
Production Co-ordinator
Lisa Lynn Kearsley
Unit Production Manager
Hunt Lowry

Location Managers
John Panzarella
Chicago:
Tom Busch
Casting
Janet Hirshenson
Jane Jenkins
Roger Mussenden
Assistant Directors
William M. Elvin
Alan Edmisten
Otie Brown
Screenplay
Bruce Joel Rubin
Director of Photography
Peter James

Colour
Technicolor
Camera Operator
Michael Ferris
Steadicam Operator
Gregory Lundsgaard
Video Supervisor
Liz Radley
Visual Effects
Supervisor:
John Nelson
Producer:
George Merkert
Co-ordinator:
Gayle Reznik
Editor:
Ladd McPartland

Opticals
Jeff Matakovich
Animation
Neil Eskini
Scott Kilburn
Andrea Sholer
Adrian Iler
Editor
Richard Chew
Production Designer
Neil Spisak
Art Director
Larry Fulton
Set Design
Gina B. Cranham
Set Decorator
Anne D. McCulley

Storyboard Artist
Len Morganti
Special Effects
Larz Anderson
Music/Music Director
John Barry
Music Extract
“Overture to William Tell” by Gioacchino Rossini, performed by The New York Philharmonic
Music Editor
Clif Kohlweck

Songs
“Some Enchanted Evening” by Richard Rogers, Oscar Hammerstein II, performed by Ezio Pinza; “Over the Rainbow” by Harold Arlen, E.Y. Harburg; “Chariots of Fire” by and performed by Vangelis

Costume Design
Judy Ruskin
Costume Supervisor
Kimberley Guenther
Make-up
Bob Mills
David Craig Forrest
Body:
Laura De’Atley
Prosthetic Make-up
Matthew W. Mungle
Hairstylists
Joe Coscia
Barbara Lorenz
Titles/Opticals
Cinema Research Corporation
Supervising Sound Editor
Richard King
Sound Editors
John Benson
Sukey Fontelieu
ADR Supervisor
Cliff Latimer
Sound Recordist
John Sutton III
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
Chris Carpenter
Doug Hemphill
Bill W. Benton
Birth Medical Adviser
William Friedland
Consultants
Medical:
Daniel Lieber
Birthing:
Anneke Campbell
Circus Co-ordinator
Bob Yerkes

Cast
Michael Keaton
Bob Jones
Nicole Kidman
Gail Jones
Bradley Whitford
Paul
Queen Latifah
Theresa
Michael Constantine
Bill
Rebecca Schull
Rose
Mark Lowenthal
Doctor Mills
Lee Garlington
Carol Sandman
Toni Sawyer
Doris
Haing S. Ngor
Mr Ho
Romy Rosemont
Anya Stasiuk
Danny Rimmer
Young Bobbie
Ruth DeSosa
Young Rose
Richard Schiff
Young Bill
Stephen Taylor Knot
Young Paul
Andrew Camuccio
Brian Camuccio
Baby Brian
Colby Sawyer Garabedian
Little Boy Brian
Mary Ann Thebus
Miss Morgenstern
Brenda Strong
Laura
Rudi Davis
George
Mark Holton
Sam
Lisa Walters
Deborah
Bruce Jarchow
Walter
Jane Morris
Dorothy
Kenneth Tigar
Doctor Califano
Ray Reinhardt
Doctor Altman
Frank DIelsi
Arnold Sherman

Billy L. Sullivan
Rollercoaster Boy
Michael Gallagher
Christopher Miranda
Rollercoaster Friends
Nora Taylor
Little Girl
Dianne B. Shaw
Detroit Mother
Sondra Rubin
Aunt Sophia
Sylvia Kauders
Aunt Tekla
Sharon Conley
Lida Stasiuk
James R. Sweeney
Nestor Stasiuk
Vasek C. Simek
Uncle Harry
Magda Zingale
Jonathan Fish
Delivery Men
James Rubin
Uncle Jimmy

Jennifer Flackett
Childbirth Teacher
Gary Rubin
Man at Wedding
Susan Breslau
Wendy Sax
Charlotte Zucker
Blanche Rubin
Ari Rubin
Guests at Wedding
John Steciw
Band Leader
Walter Klimchuk
Priest
Peggy Roeder
Treva Tegtmeier
Oksana Fedunyszyn
Lynn Baber
Cousins

10,487 feet

116 minutes

● Detroit, 1963. Young Bobby Ivanovich wishes on a star for a circus to perform in his back yard. He confidently invites all his schoolmates next day to come to the show; everybody turns up except the circus. Disgraced, Bobby hides in a cupboard. Thirty years later, now known as Bob Jones, successful public relations executive to an L.A. company, he is battling against cancer. He decides to videotape a message for the child he may never see, carried by his wife Gail. It proves a difficult project: Bob is estranged from his parents, avoids recollections of his own childhood, and feels awkward before the camera. Taped tributes from colleagues are edgy and non-committal. Told by his doctor that his life expectancy is no more than a few months, he adopts Gail’s suggestion to try a Chinese healer, Mr Xo. He decides Xo is a charlatan, but the encounter prompts him to try and understand himself better. He goes to visit Carol, a former neighbour and girlfriend, and realises there were aspects of his childhood he had forgotten completely.

Gail watches the videotape, upset that Bob reveals more to the camera than he does to her, and begs him to share his feelings. Shaken, he revisits Mr Ho, who insists he must search out his true worth from within. Accompanied by Gail, he flies out to the wedding of his brother Paul, in Detroit. Reminded by a visit to the old family house, he tells Gail about the circus incident and how he blamed his father for working too hard to pay attention to his family. Bob makes another wish: that God will let him live long enough to see his child. After the wedding reception, a riotous success, the old feud with his parents resurfaces; they are angry that he disowned them by changing his name; he complains that they never come to see him. Bob returns home, convinced that his last visit to his parents has not removed the emotional impasse. Mr Ho confirms that his body is still poisoned by anger.

Bob involves himself more closely in the progress of Gail’s pregnancy, and together they learn that the baby will be a boy. Bob tapes messages about handball, shaving, etiquette and car maintenance, and accompanies Gail to pregnancy classes. They visit a fun fair

and he takes a solitary ride on a rollercoaster, overcoming a childhood phobia. According to his doctor, cancer should have claimed him by now, but he is at Gail’s side when the baby is born and they share the delight of the first weeks of parenthood. Then the disease closes in and Bob deteriorates rapidly, tended by Theresa, a hospice nurse, and advised by Mr Ho to make peace with himself. Phoning his parents, Bob admits at last that they did everything they could for him, and asks forgiveness. They fly to be at his side, to meet their grandson, and to make a final gift: a circus arrives in Bob’s back garden. Bob finally slips away on a terminal rollercoaster, leaving a special message of thanks on videotape to his toddler son.

● Like his scripts for *Jacob’s Ladder* and *Ghost*, Bruce Joel Rubin’s new story again defines an area of existence in which it is possible for a departing soul to correct a few errors before being claimed by the hereafter. Scoff as we may, the Rubin theory has its attractions. Half-lives have become increasingly familiar as a sign of the times, reflected on the screen by a fresh resurgence of vampires alongside such variants as *Flatliners*, *Always* and *Shadowlands*. While the beams encircling a bemused Patrick Swayze at the end of *Ghost* may resemble a trick of the light from *Close Encounters*, the allusion to innumerable reported brink-of-death experiences contrives to raise an inextinguishable hope or two – not the least being that he will, at some speed, be removed to a distant planet. In *My Life*, the Great White Glow is back once more, partly in the form of electric flashes that burst out from the corner of the healer’s surgery, apparently to signal the blowing of emotional fuses, but more decisively as the cancer-sufferer, no longer sensibly fearful of fair-ground attractions, takes a rollercoaster ride into the unknown.

On what authority Rubin provides these assurances is unclear from the behaviour of his characters, whose moral rearmament is instinctive rather than orthodox. True, the dying Bob Jones has a high old time at his brother’s wedding, but his own marriage is notably uncluttered by prayers, baptisms or conventional last rites, while the only faith emanating from



Little picture show: Michael Keaton

his Chinese consultant is that Bob can achieve well-being by his own effort of will. His relationship with God, by contrast, is a matter of multiple misunderstanding, stemming from the mistaken assumption that wishing on a star brings an instant response. That Bob blames his parents, not God, for his disappointment implies several flaws in his upbringing and reasoning powers, while the fact that he holds his grudge for the next 30 years hints at a peculiar insensitivity. It is also difficult to understand the attraction of the circus even when it finally appears, since Bob is unable to do much about it beyond pointing things out to his incredulous infant.

More significantly, Bob's second starwish, that he be permitted to live to meet his baby son, achieves a positively miraculous divine response for which God unfairly gets no credit at all. Further confused by the hang-up over the rollercoaster, a challenge which Bob has to confront in order to exorcise his troubled childhood, this meddling with the supernatural does nothing for Rubin's main theme – that it pays to be nice to people when you're on the way down – except lumber it with whimsical protestations that everything's bound to be all light on the night. Intriguingly, what's left of *My Life*, if such distractions are removed, is the account of a failed son, husband and parent who realises, with barely enough time to do anything about it, that he only has himself to blame (possibly even for his own cancer?). Apart from getting his relatives off the hook, it seems an uncomfortable legacy to pass on to his son who, on this evidence, would be fully justified in repeating the whole suicidal process by blaming the absent father for anything and everything.

As first-time director, well cushioned by his co-producer, and with at least five of his family among the cast, Rubin coasts unremarkably through an affable and largely unscuffed decor. By the device of filming through a video camera at haphazard moments, he disguises some of the clumsier lapses of his script, using video as a form of insulation between Bob and the 'real' world.

But where Demi Moore in *Ghost*, left to pursue her separate life, survived the partial loss of her lover with an appealing dignity, Nicole Kidman flounders with an underwritten role and makes little impression, neither blamed nor credited for much of her partner's interests. For his part, Michael Keaton declines gently, well-versed in angst, his customary expression of querulous uncertainty suggesting that he, along with the rest of us, remains unconvinced that all the answers have been supplied. His experiences may set some kind of example on tape – few fathers can now avoid the responsibility of leaving chirpy messages for their offspring to remember them by – but it has to be said that on film they look rather less than substantial.

Philip Strick

L'Odeur de la Papaye Verte (Mùi Đu Đu Xanh/ The Scent of Green Papaya)

France 1993

Director: Tran Anh Hung

Certificate	Make-up
U	Amélie Rouffio
Distributor	Hair
Artificial Eye	Laurent Blanchard
Production Companies	Sound Recordist
Les Productions	Michel Guiffan
Lazennec	Dolby stereo
In co-production with	Sound Re-recordists
LA SFP Cinéma/	Joël Faure
La Sept Cinéma	
With the participation	Cast
of Canal Plus/the	Yên-Khê Tran Nu
Centre National de la	Mùi, age 20
Cinématographie	Man San Lu
With financial support	Mùi, age 10
from the Fondation	Thi Lóc Trung
Gan pour le Cinéma	Mother
and assistance from	Anh Hoa Nguyen
Procirep	Old Thi
Executive Producer	Hoa Hôi Vương
Christophe Rossignon	Khuyen
Associate Producers	Ngọc Trung Tran
Adeline Lecallier	Father
Alain Rocca	Vantha Talisman
SFPC Co-ordinator	Thu
Cléo Daran	Kéo Souvannavong
Production Manager	Trung
Eric Dangremont	Van Oanh Nguyen
Casting	Mr Thuan
Nicolas Cambois	Gérard Neth
Assistant Director	Tin
Nicolas Cambois	NhatDo
Screenplay	Lam
Tran Anh Hung	ThiHai Vo
Director of Photography	Grandmother
Benoît Delhomme	Thi Thanh Tra Nguyen
In colour	Mai
Editors	Lam HuyBui
Nicole Dedieu	Doctor
Jean-Pierre Roques	Xuan Thu Nguyen
Set Design	Antique Dealer
Alain Nègre	
Music	9,322 feet
Tiêt Ton-That	104 minutes
Costume Design	
Jean-Philippe Abril	Subtitles
Wardrobe Supervisor	
Danièle Laffargue	

● Saigon, 1951. Ten-year-old Mùi arrives from her village home to work as the junior maid in a middle-class household; her father has died and her mother has been forced to send her to work. The elderly servant Thi trains Mùi in her duties and explains the family situation. The household's only income is from the mother's small cloth and yarn shop; the father is an idler who has three times vanished for long periods, taking all the family savings with him. His mother, a pious Buddhist, has not left her upstairs room for seven years, since the death from illness of her granddaughter To. The grandmother is also in permanent mourning for her own husband, who died young, and has rejected overtures from the kindly Mr Thuan, who adores her from afar. The three surviving children are all sons: the teenaged Trung and the two young boys Lam and Tin.

Mui has hardly got the measure of her work before the father vanishes again, leaving his wife to sell heir-

looms to buy rice. Mùi gets her first (unvoiced) crush on Khuyen, Trung's classmate and a frequent visitor to the house. The youngest son Tin takes delight in tormenting Mùi and one day causes her to break an antique vase; but the mother, who treats Mùi more and more like her own late daughter, is indulgent and forgiving. Mùi befriends Mr Thuan and helps him sneak upstairs for a glimpse of Grandma. While her son is still away, Grandma falls nervously ill and the mother collapses under the strain.

Ten years later. Trung is married, and his mercenary wife Thu pressures her mother-in-law to economise by dismissing Mùi. Mùi moves to work instead for Khuyen, who has become an accomplished pianist and has a boisterous fiancée. Mùi is a calm and silent presence in the new house. But Khuyen's fiancée discovers that Mùi dotes on her employer and flounces out. Khuyen starts to reciprocate Mùi's quiet affection and decides to teach her to read. Some time later, Mùi has become his wife.

● Tran Anh Hung, born in Vietnam and educated in Paris, was inspired to become a film-maker by the example of Lam Lê, the pioneer French-Vietnamese director, and he worked on Lê's seminal *Dust of Empire*. Tran's two short films, *La Femme mariée de Nam Xuong* (1987) and *La Pierre de l'attente* (1991) – are both close in spirit to Lê's film, but *The Scent of Green Papaya* picks up their elliptical narrative structures and their accumulation-of-details style and turns them into something distinct and underivative. This is a remarkably confident and achieved debut feature.

In part, the confidence must be related to the conditions of production. Tran was obliged to abandon his original plan to shoot in Vietnam and made the entire film instead in a studio at Bry-sur-Marne, a limitation that clearly meshed with the aesthetic decision to build the film from rigorously controlled patterns of salient detail. *Green Papaya* is analytic (and defiantly idiosyncratic) in structure, in ways that allow Tran to prevent the film from falling into the James Ivory trap of wallowing in nostalgia for more elegant times, but also allow him to stress the metaphorical dimension of Mùi's growth to maturity. He has described his film as an attempt to deal with "the problem of servitude", especially as it affects Vietnamese women. Mùi's trajectory from naivety and wonderment through the inculcated routines of domestic labour to the subtler servitude of devotion to a man works as a doubled-edged metaphor.

In one way, this is an account of a Vietnamese woman achieving a kind of fulfilment: realising her own potential without remotely transcending her allotted social role. In another, Mùi's case is a cypher for a much larger social process: the shift from the countryside to cities, the developing sophistication and education, and then, inevitably, the 'westernisation', ren-

dered here through the decor of Khuyen's house and the young musician's absorption in Debussy and Chopin. Both stages of this process find Mui learning by example. First she learns the preparation of food (notably the chopping of papaya for salad) from Thi; then she learns to read from Khuyen. Tran uses images rather than words to underline his theme: both periods in Mui's education are presented as patterns of gestures copied from the educator until perfected.

Metaphor apart, the film is overwhelmingly sensual in its depiction of its milieu. In part, this is a triumph for the cinematographer and art directors, who have recreated the light, the colours and the timbre of two Vietnamese houses in the studio with almost hallucinatory intensity. But it is also a triumph of Tran's own visual sensibility. The film alternates between huge close-up details (the middle son Lam tormenting ants on a window ledge, Mùi's finger probing the seed-pulp inside an unripe papaya) and extended wide-angle tracking shots through the houses, following the to-ings and fro-ings of the various characters and thus stressing the interconnectedness of the household routines. Both types of shot are used to focus on Mùi herself for much of the time, but both are also sometimes used to broaden the focus, acknowledging Mùi's place in a larger domestic and social fabric. The general sense of off-screen realities is amplified by the soundtrack, which contains occasional hints of the anti-colonial war then being fought in the faraway North.

There is sadly no real Vietnamese tradition for Tran to draw on in constructing his images and metaphors. Vietnamese film production dates back to the 1930s (when it was largely in the hands of Vietnamese-Chinese), but most production since the 1930s – including the communist government's propaganda output – has been locked into stale conventions of theatricality and melodrama. Implicitly acknowledging his own cultural identity as a westernised emigré artist, Tran has combined ideas and influences from both oriental and occidental sources to underpin his vision. The use of the studio and the *mise en scène* of tracking shots is indebted to western tradition, from von Sternberg to Bresson. The use of a small boy given to domestic mischief and provocative farting is a respectful nod to Ozu.

Tran insists that his future projects will be shot in Vietnam, and that they will deal with the country's present-day realities and problems; *Green Papaya* will be his only period movie, and it expresses things that he needed to get out of his system. It's hard to imagine what the film might mean to a Vietnamese audience, either in Vietnam or in the global diaspora, but its established success suggests that its central conundrum – the tangled lines between servitude and love – achieves a universality. Not bad for a first-time director far from home.

Tony Rayns

Director: Jean Marboeuf

50 | 4 SIGHT AND SOUND

France, 1940. The German army has invaded, and the French Government, in disarray, is on the run. Ministers, their secretaries and clerks flee south in a convoy of cars and taxis, living out of their suitcases and making policy on the hoof. In order to bring stability back to the country, they decide they need to appoint a leader that the people will respect. In the end, they plump for 84-year-old Marshal Philippe Pétain, the hero of Verdun. The French military, meanwhile, is being driven back. A young soldier, François, watches helplessly as his colleagues are bombed and killed. The Government eventually settles in a hotel at the centre of Vichy. Here, Pétain selects his cabinet. At first, he is chary of giving the prime position of Foreign Minister to the forceful, manipulative Laval, but then he realises it is best to have such a man on the inside. His generals warn him that France is being abandoned by Britain, and is not properly prepared for war. To save young French lives, he prepares to make peace with Hitler. Under the terms of the Armistice, France is split in two: the Nazis take the north half, including Paris and the coast. Pétain and co are left with the South. While these key decisions are being carried out, François marries his childhood sweetheart Colette, and returns to his civilian job as *sous-chef* at the hotel. Laval encourages Pétain to think that the French have become a slovenly, unpatriotic nation, and suggests to him that they need to collaborate with Germany to bring about a new German order. With this in mind, Laval arranges a meeting between Hitler and Pétain. He also manages to persuade Parliament to dissolve itself and to invest almost absolute power in the Marshal. Pétain, driven by vanity and a senile lust for power, passes a series of ever more brutal laws, many of them targeted against the Jews. When his regime is criticised by the press in Paris, he holds Laval responsible, tricks him into offering his resignation, and has him thrown into prison. Laval's Nazi friends intervene on his behalf; Pétain is forced to make a humiliating climbdown and invite the Foreign Minister back into the Government. François' political views are harden

Old man of Europe: Jacques Dufilho

intertitle and then throw in a little montage sequence, perhaps consisting of quickfire snippets of documentary footage and accompanied by rousing, martial music. As a device, this is about as subtle as pressing fast-forward on the VCR. Perhaps chary of signing over the film in its entirety to the reptilian politicians, Marboeuf creates a handful of fictional characters, notably the 'ordinary couple' Colette and François, through whose eyes the weighty events are seen. That this is nothing more than a token gesture soon becomes clear as these characters' contributions dwindle: they may start off in the foreground, but eventually they all disappear, and we're left with the loathsome double act of Pétain and Laval.

Without a microscopic grasp of French politics and history, it's hard to assess how 'accurately' the film portrays the period. One of its messages, though, is clear. It is surely a mistake to make a hobbling, geriatric and vainglorious 84-year-old your leader. Pétain, as portrayed here, sometimes seems like a Gallic version of Albert Steptoe. He is so palpably incompetent, and so utterly dislikeable, that he hardly warrants a film of his own. There's no faulting Jacques Dufilho's performance: he strikes just the right note of pompous fragility. There is also a fine performance from Jean Yanne as the crumpled, chain-smoking and eminently seedy Laval. Occasionally, in its set-pieces, the film shows a spark of life. And there are sometimes little flickerings of humour. When the ragbag Government finally wheels its way into Vichy, a passer-by, surprised by all these dignified but dishevelled-looking men in suits, asks, "What's this?" and is told that it's a "travelling circus". Overall, though, at a painful 135 minutes, *Pétain* sometimes seems as long as the War itself. The subject matter simply doesn't lend itself to the historical epic that Marboeuf wants to make. As we know that Pétain is a complicit, doddering old fool right from the start, the story is shorn of any tension: it's just a case of waiting for events to wind their weary way to a foregone conclusion. Surely, if Marboeuf really wanted to provoke frenzied debate, he should have followed Ophüls' example, and made this film as a documentary, allowing collaborators and resistance fighters alike a chance to stand on their soapbox. As a piece of drama, *Pétain* ends up as craven and as feeble as its central character.

Geoffrey Macnab

Sister Act 2:
Back in the Habit

USA 1993

Director: Bill Duke

Certificate PG	College Choir
Distributor Buena Vista	Orchestrations Oscar Castro-Neves
Production Company Touchstone Pictures	Music Producer Marc Shaiman
Executive Producers Laurence Mark Mark Iscovich	Music Supervisor Daniel Allan Carlin
Co-executive Producer Christopher Meledandri	Supervising Music Editor Charles Martin Inouye
Producers Scott Rudin Dawn Steel	Music Editors Nancy Fogarty Jim Harrison
Associate Producers Marc Shaiman Ron Stacker Thompson	Song Adaptations Marc Shaiman Mervyn Warren
Production Supervisor Jack L. Murray	Singing Voice for Kathy Najimy Andrea Robinson
Production Co-ordinator Mary Courtney	Songs "A Deeper Love" by David Cole, Robert Clivilles, performed by Aretha Franklin; "The Mother of All Medleys" performed by Whoopi Goldberg; "Love Child" by R. Dean Taylor, Pamela Sawyer, Frank E. Wilson, Deke Richards; "Please Mr Postman" by William Garrett, Georgia Dobbins, Brian Holland, Freddie Gorman, Robert Bateman; "I Can't Help Myself (Sugar Pie, Honey Bunch)" by Brian Holland, Lamont Dozier, Edward Dozier, Edward Holland Jnr; "Bad Girls" by Donna Summer, Bruce Sudano, Edward Hokenson, Joe "Beans" Esposito; "Nowhere to Run" by Brian Holland, Lamont Dozier, Edward Holland Jnr; "I Will Follow Him" by Norman Gimbel, Arthur Altman, Jacques Plante, Franck Pourcel, Paul Mauriat; "Can't Turn You Loose" by Otis Redding; "Le Freak", "We are Family" by Bernard Edwards, Nile Rodgers; "Shop Around" by William "Smokey" Robinson, Berry Gordy; "Devil With the Blue Dress" by William Stevenson, Frederick Long; "Proud Mary" by John Fogerty; "Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Yellow Polka Dot Bikini" by Paul Vance, Lee Pockress; "The Hustle" by Van McCoy; "Mr Big Stuff" by Joseph Broussard, Ralph Williams, Carrol Washington; "My Guy" by William "Smokey" Robinson; "Shotgun" by Autry DeWalt; "For the Love of Money" by Kenneth Gamble, Leon Huff, Anthony Jackson; "Who's Got the Flo" by Ron Johnson, Lauryn Hill, Devin Kamin, performed by Ron Johnson, Lauryn Hill and The Classroom Kids; "Wake Up and Pay Attention" by Whoopi Goldberg, Kevin Cloud, Roni Skies, Valeria Andrews, performed by Valeria Andrews, Ryan Toby; "Love Boat"
Unit Production Manager Paul Moen	
Location Managers Robbie Goldstein	
Associate: Martine White	
Post-production Co-ordinators Kathy Virkler Lynn Sutherland	
2nd Unit Director Dan Perri Ernie Orsatti	
Casting Aleta Chapelle ADR Voice: Barbara Harris	
Assistant Directors Barry Thomas Nandi Bowe Hilbert Hakim	
Screenplay James Orr Jim Crickshank Judi Ann Mason Based on characters created by Joseph Howard	
Director of Photography Oliver Wood Cinemascope prints by Technicolor	
2nd Unit Director of Photography Glenn Kershaw	
Lighting Design/Consultant Louis Mawcinnitt	
Camera Operators Bill Roe B/A: William Barber	
Video Playback John Agaloff	
Opticals Buena Vista Imaging	
Editors John Carter Pem Herring Stuart Pappé	
Production Designer John DeCuir Jnr	
Art Director Louis M. Mann	
Set Design Lauren Cory Sandy Getzler	
Set Decorator Bruce Gibeson	
Illustrator Marc Baird	
Murals Randy "Relic" Legaspi	
Special Effects Supervisor James Karl Fredburg	
Music Miles Goodman	
Music Extract "Ode to Joy" (from "Symphony No. 9, Op. 125") by Ludwig von Beethoven, performed by The Chapman	

by Paul Williams, Charles Fox; "Never Should Have Let You Go" by Eric Foster White, performed by Hi-Five; "His Eye is on the Sparrow" by C.D. Martin, Charles Gabriel, performed by Tanya Blount, Lauryn Hill; "Get Up Offa That Thing" by Deanna Brown, Deidra Brown, Yamma Brown, "Ball of Confusion (That's What the World is Today)" by Norman Whitfield, Barrett Strong, "Dancing in the Street" by Ivy Joe Hunter, William Stevenson, Marvin Gaye, performed by Whoopi Goldberg and The Nuns; "In the Still of the Night" by Fred Parris, "Barbara Allen" (traditional), performed by The Rock Theatre Group; "Lord, Send a Revival" by Roy Crayton Jnr; "Joyful, Joyful" performed by Ryan Toby, Lauryn Hill, Devin Kamin, Ron Johnson, The St. Francis Choir; "What Have You Done For Me Lately" by James Harris III, Terry Lewis; "It's Me Again God" by and performed by Devin Kamin; "Wandering Eyes" by Darrol "Shamello" Durant, B-Wyze, Kevin "Sleek" Young, performed by Nuttin' Nyce; "Oh Happy Day" by Edwin R. Hawkins, performed by Ryan Toby, The St. Francis Choir; "O.P.P." by Alphonso Mizell, Freddie Perren, Deke Richards, Berry Gordy, Anthony Criss, Keir Gist, Vincent Brown; "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" by Nicholas Ashford, Valerie Simpson	Choreography Michael Peters
	Costume Design Francine Jamison-Tanchuck
	Costume Supervisor Andrea Weaver
	Make-up Key Supervisor: Perry M. Germain Artist: Carol Schwartz
	Hairstylists Julia L. Walker Robert Louis Stevenson
	Title Design Dan Perri R/Greenberg Associates, West Otis Sallid
	Supervising Sound Effects Editor John M. Stacy
	Sound Editors Jeff Clark Dale Johnston Adam Johnston Bill Manger Dan Thomas Dave Whittaker
	ADR Supervisor Petra Bach
	ADREditors Zack Davis Robert Ulrich
	Sound Recordists Jim Webb Music: Joel Moss
	ADR Recordist Doc Kane
	Foley Recordist David Gertz Dolby stereo
	Sound Re-recordists Terry Porter
Cast Whoopi Goldberg Deloris Van Cartier Kathy Najimy Sister Mary Patrick Barnard Hughes Father Maurice Mary Wickes Sister Mary Lazarus James Coburn Mr Crisp Michael Jeter Father Ignatius Wendy Makkena Sister Mary Robert Sheryl Lee Ralph Florence Watson Robert Pastorelli Joey Bustamente Thomas Gottschalk Father Wolfgang Maggie Smith Mother Superior Lauryn Hill Rita Watson Brad Sullivan Father Thomas Alanna Ubach Maria Ryan Toby Ahmal Ron Johnson Sketch Jennifer "Love" Hewitt Margaret Devin Kamin Frankie Christian Fitzharris Tyler Chase Tanya Blount Tanya Mehran Marcos Sedghi Marcos Valeria Andrews Donna Brooks-Jackson Monica Calhoun Martha Gonzales Deondray Gossett Frank Howard David Kater Kimberlee Kramer Deedee Magno Patrick Malone Alex Martin Jermaine Montell Sacha Thomas Ashley Thompson Classroom Kids Pat Crawford Brown Susan Browning Georgia Creighton Edith Diaz Ellen Albertini Dow Beth Fowler Prudence Wright Holmes Sherilizzard Susan Johnson-Kehn Ruth Kobart Darlene Koldenhoven Rose Parenti Carmen Zapata Choir Nuns Jenifer Lewis Pamela Tyson Sharon Brown Backup Singers Regan Patano Kevin Alexander Stea John Jacquet Jnr Sebastian Lacause	

Luca Tommassini Michael Gregory Gong Gabriel Trupin Raymond G. del Barrio Frank Williams Lacy Darryl Phillips Dancers Paul Thorpe Dancer 'Postman' Paul Genick Dancer 'Sugar Pie' Aaron Baker Dancer 'Teeny Bikini' Warren Frost Robin Gammell Revalyn Golde Archdiocese People Yolanda Whitaker Sondra Bill Duke Mr Johnson Sydney Lassick Competition Announcer Michael "Bear" Taliferro Security Guard Kai Bowe	Stage Manager William S. Turchyn II Assistant Stage Manager John Fontana Michael A. Tice Robert Simokovic Flying Technicians Iris Graves Pamela Taylor Robert J. Benson Juliette Hagerman Christina Royster Kwaku A. James Roy M. Crayton Kwame James Latesha Crayton Erica Atkins Jennifer Reeves Iris Choir William D. Hall Chapman Choir Leader 9,636 feet 107 minutes
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During her headlining Las Vegas act, singer Deloris Van Cartier sees two of her nun friends, Sister Mary Patrick and Sister Mary Robert, in the audience and invites them on stage. After the performance, they tell Deloris that they need her help. They are teachers at St Francis, a ghetto school which is failing to communicate with its pupils. At a further meeting, Mother Superior persuades Deloris to resume the habit as Sister Mary Clarence and become the music teacher.

The school is run by kindly but dodgery Father Maurice, under the tight fiscal control of a Mr Crisp. The music class is regarded by the students as a formality, one they'll pass while rehearsing their rap routines. Deloris quells initial resistance but, having failed to impress attitudinous beauty Rita Watson, she then falls victim to a prank. In the meantime she discovers that Mr Crisp has persuaded the diocese to close down St Francis to make way for a parking lot.

By threatening to fail them all, Deloris brings the class to heel, except Rita, who walks out. Each class member is asked to do a version of 'Mary Had a Little Lamb' and several of them prove to have amazing voices. They are taken to watch Deloris and the nuns performing for old folks and are persuaded to form a choir of their own. Father Maurice, however, upbraids Doloris for taking the students off the premises without parental permission, and cancels all further school trips.

Sister Mary Robert overhears Rita singing beautifully in the chapel but Rita resists Deloris's attempts to lure her back, explaining that her mother regards singing as a distraction from real schoolwork. The kids clean up the old music room and Rita rejoins them. They give their first performance in front of the school, which is such a success that the nuns decide to enter the choir for a major competition in Hollywood. The sisters discover old trophies proving that the school had a long tradition of winning the contest.

Having overcome Father Maurice's objections, the nuns raise the \$2,000 for the trip with another concert by Deloris and the nuns. Rita, however, is forced by her mother to pull out. At the last minute, Rita forges her mother's signature and boards the bus and they set off. Meanwhile Crisp has discovered the truth about Doloris's real profession and insists that Father Maurice and the brothers pursue the bus and withdraw the school from the competition.

Intimidated by the excellence of the competition, the choir loses heart, but they are revitalised by a speech from Deloris, impugning their courage. Seeing them elated, Father Maurice decides to let them go ahead while the brothers conspire to lock Crisp in a cupboard. Rita at first falters when ►



Gettheeto a nunnery: Whoopi Goldberg

◀ she sees her mother in the audience, but recovers to sing solo. In the wings, Deloris instructs the choir to discard their robes and they cartwheel on to give a rap/gospel/funk performance which wins the first prize and ensures the survival of the school. Rita and her mother are reconciled.

From Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland to the Kids from Fame, the myth that every American classroom is brimming with unrealised talent remains a powerful and important one for Hollywood and that larger myth it maintains, the American Way of success. Moreover, the current crisis in American education, where the logic of capitalist aspiration leads black youth into the only readily accessible enterprise available – the drugs trade – makes the myth doubly important. With other serious employment alternatives thin on the ground, *Sister Act 2: Back in the Habit* suggests that schoolkids can collectively sing their way out of the ghetto.

We can pass politely over the fact that the music business and the drugs trade are somewhat interdependent and merely note that the former is a very big dollar earner with the virtue of being legal. Thus the film idles along on the surging emotion provided by the often superb gospel and soul singing, while introducing a familiar and likeable mix of classroom characters: a shy and serious crooner, a sensible and manly rapper, a boy-obsessed soul diva, a wannabee-black cool white and a feisty, pouty beauty – all of them looking so cute and multi-ethnic you couldn't fail to give them a job in showbiz.

Yet there's an internal contradiction to this whole fantasy, one that's uncovered at the climax when Whoopi lets the kids wear their own clothes and improvise. Here all discipline and training evaporate. They haven't needed to learn anything after all, except to clean up their lyrics and to feel more self-confident. Here the myth and the reality form a sinister conjunction. What are we to make of a piece of showbiz that preaches showbiz as an answer to the problems of the American inner cities? How can a major comedy star playing a major pop star playing a nun playing a teacher validate all this tub-thumping propaganda? It would take a dozen trendy vicars to come up with a more preachy and patronising notion than the idea that kids will only listen to someone who regularly plays Vegas.

Instead of a useful model for building adolescent self-esteem, *Sister Act 2* is more of a recipe for confusion. The contradictory needs of community and individual ambition are entirely glossed over. There is barely a suggestion of struggle or difficulty for the kids. You might think this is too much to ask of a comedy fantasy. Yet the film doesn't even try very hard to be funny. It's more about ecstatic self-affirmation, and that's one thing that adolescents hardly need to be taught.

Nick James

Surf Ninjas

USA 1993

Director: Neal Israel

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Entertainment

Production Company

New Line Cinema

Executive Producers

Sara Risher

Dan Gordon

Kevin Moreton

Producer

Evzen Kolar

Associate Producer

Ernie Reyes Jnr

Production Executive

Timothy Gray

Production Associate

Matthew Gayne

Production Controller

Paul Prokop

Production Co-ordinators

Liz Wartenberg

Thailand:

Panyawadee Navarut

Na Ayudhya

Hawaii:

Karen Greenlee

Unit Production Managers

Tom Udell

Gene Marum

Thailand:

Anne McCraffrey

Hawaii Unit Supervisor

Matthew Gayne

Location Managers

Timothy T. Hillman

2nd Unit:

Karin Beck

Thailand:

Krayatyp Prabhawat

Executive in Charge

of Post-production

Joe Fineman

Post-production

Supervisor

Ric Keeley

2nd Unit Director

Ernie Orsatti

Casting

Annette Benson

Thailand:

Tammy Musigdilok

Assistant Directors

J. Stephen Buck

Cellin Gluck

Martha L. Mericka

Rebecca Strickland

Thailand:

Charlie Sungkawess

Chirasak Wongsaroi

Tippawan Mamanee

Somchai

Santithrangkun

Screenplay

Dan Gordon

Directors of Photography

Arthur Albert

Victor Hammer

Colour

DeLuxe

2nd Unit Director

of Photography

Philip Holachan

Hawaii Director

of Photography

Yuri Farrant

Camera Operators

James Jansen

Russell McElhatton

Tom Nordstrom

Robert E. Stanley

Hawaii:

Philip Nordblom

Steadicam Operators

John Nuler

2nd Unit:

Robert E. Stanley

Digital Visual Effects

Supervisor

Steve Rundell

Visual Effects Editors

C. Marie Davis

Digital:

Peter Koczera

Digital Paint Design

Joni Jacobson

Danny Mudgett

Editor

Tom Walls

Production Designer

Michael Novotny

Art Directors

Curtis W. Baruth

Thailand:

Lek Chaivan

Art Department

Co-ordinators

Jay Friedman

Donna Lindholm

Thailand:

Deirdre Cotrell

Set Decorators

Janis Lubin

Thailand:

Michael Bacon

Set Dresser

Deirdre Cotrell

Draughtsmen

Kristian D. Bast

Thailand:

Vasu Kantatham

Lead Scenic Artist

Debbie De Villa

Scenic Artist

Victor Balogh

George G. Karnof

Keith A. Korpf

Brent W. Myers

Paul Trachtenberg

Scott B. Valdes

Storyboard Artist

Fred Lucky

Special Effects

Co-ordinator:

Frank Ceglia

Supervisor:

Rangsen

Rangsimaporn

Design:

Joni Jacobsen

Danny Mudgett

Music

David Kitay

Music Extract

"Symphony No. 9"

by Ludwig van

Beethoven, performed

by Hamburg Radio

Symphony Orchestra

Music performed by

Guitars/Synthesisers/

Bass/Percussion:

David Kitay

Drums:

Chad Wackerman

Woodwinds:

Don Marquise

Music Supervisor

Dawn Solér

Music Editor

Chris McGeary

Songs

"Monkey in the Jungle"

by Neal Sundet, Brynn

Arens, Greg Eidem,

Joachim Baecker,

performed by Rattling

Bones; "Hit the Coast"

by and performed by

Tone Loc; "Dance on

the Water" by John Orr,

"Woody" David Adams,

performed by Us, Da

North Shore Surf Band;

"Stuck With You

(Straight Fifty-Eight)"

by Neal Israel, Steve

Donnelly, performed

by Neal Israel;

"Carousel Waltz" by

and performed by

Harry Cohen; "Cock of

the North"; "Chinese

Celebration" by

J. Leach; "Our Jungle"

by Dave Rick, Chris

Xefos, Roger Murdoch,

John S. Hall, performed

by King Missile; "You

Know How We Do It"

by D. Walberg,

L. Thomas, J. Jackson,

J. Marshall, performed

by Pandemonium;

"Here Comes Trouble"

by Brian Howe, Terry

Thomas, performed

by Bad Company;

"From Now On"

by David Kitay, Hollye

Leven, performed

by David Kitay, Neal

Sundet; "Barbara Ann"

by Fred Fassert,

performed by The Bobs

Costume Design

Deborah Kramer

Costume Supervisor

Meta Jardine

Key Make-up/Hair

Suzanne Parker

Sanders

Make-up/Hair Artists

Barrie Buckner

Thailand:

Prisana Trachai

Special Make-up Effects

Tony Gardner

John Henry

Title Design

Steve Skinner

Sound Design

Harry Cohen

Supervising Sound Editor

Steven Williams

Dialogue Editor

Jim Brookshire

ADR Editors

Cathie Speakman

Ben Beardwood

Foley Editor

Jeff Vaughn

Sound Recordists

Ike Magal

Music:

Michael Letho

Foley Recordist

Brian Geer

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Ken Teaney

Scott Ganary

Sound Effects Editors

Ann Scibelli

David Farmer

Foley Artists

Vince Nicasto

Gregg Barbanell

Stunt Co-ordinators

Philip Tan

Thailand:

Joke Tachalhom

Stunts

Bob Arnold

Mickey Cassidy

Scott Coker

B.J. Davis

Gary Guerico

Soogin Lee

Ed Matthews

Ernie Orsatti

Desi Singh

Tony B. Thompson

Tadashi Yamashita

Tom Callas

Frank Ceglia

Monty Cox

Richie Gaona

Evzen Kolar

Will Leong

Gary Nakahama

Martin Sanchez

Rodriguez

Barron Tabura

Michael Washlake

Martial Arts

Co-ordinator:

Philip Tan

Choreography:

Ernie Reyes Snr

Armourer

Samrit Sripitak

Cast

Ernie Reyes Snr

Zatch

Ernie Reyes Jnr

Johnny

ToneLoc

Lieutenant Spence

Leslie Nielsen

Colonel Chi

Kelly Hu

Ro-May

Rob Schneider

Iggy

Nicolas Cowan

Adam

John Karlen

Mac

Keone Young

Baba Ram

Olivier Mills

Moto Surfer

Jonathan Schmock

School Cop

Neal Israel

Mr Dunbar

Vladimir Parra

Brandon Karrer

Dathan Aragon

Phillip Bayless

Back-up Singers

Phillip Tan

Captain Ming

Romy Walthall

Miss Robertson

Rachel Kolar

RETROSPECTIVE

Brighton Rock

United Kingdom 1947

Director: John Boulting

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Electric Pictures

Production Company

Associated British
Picture Corporation

Producer

Roy Boulting

Associate Producer

Peter De Sarigny

Production Manager

Gerard Bryant

Assistant Director

Gerald Mitchell

Screenplay

Graham Greene

Terence Rattigan

Based on the novel
by Graham Greene

Director of Photography

Harry Waxman

Black and white

Camera Operator

Gilbert Taylor

Editor

Peter Graham Scott

Art Director

John Howell

Music/Music Director

Hans May

Songs

"More Than Ever"
by Leslie Julian Jones

Costumes

Honoria Plesch

Make-up

Bob Clarke

Sound Editor

Audrey Bennett

Sound Recordist

Frank McNally

Cast

Richard Attenborough

Pinkie Brown

Hermione Baddeley

Ida Arnold

William Hartnell

Dallow

Carol Marsh

Rose

Nigel Stock

Cubitt

Wylie Watson

Spicer

Harcourt Williams

Prewitt

Alan Wheatley

Fred Hale

George Carney

Phil Corkery

Charles Goldner

Colleoni

Virginia Winter

Judy

Reginald Purdell

Frank

Lina Barrie

Molly

Joan Sterndale-Bennett

Delia

Harry Ross

Brewer

Campbell Copelin

Police Inspector

Mary Stone

Waitress

Norman Watson

Racecourse Evangelist

8,280 feet

92 minutes

Originally reviewed:

MFB December 1947

Brighton between the wars. Kolley Kibber, a *Daily Messenger* journalist, arrives in the city. His paper has promised a prize of 10 guineas to any holidaymaker who identifies him from his photograph. Unfortunately for him, the members of a Brighton gang spot his picture. They know that his real name is Fred Hale, and they consider him to be responsible for the murder of a colleague, William Kite. Seeking revenge, they pursue him round the city. The gang's 17-year-old leader, Pinkie Brown, eventually corners him in a fairground ghost train and murders him.

Back at headquarters, Pinkie is furious to learn that his elderly henchman Spicer may have been spotted depositing a Kolley Kibber card in Snow's Café. He goes to the café to see if the card is still there. He runs into a pretty waitress, Rose, who had indeed spotted Spicer. Pinkie decides the best way to keep Rose quiet is to strike up a relationship with her. Meanwhile, Ida, a touring singer who had met Hale earlier in the day, becomes suspicious and resolves to investigate. Pinkie and Rose meet on the pier. Pinkie warns her that any woman who meddles with the mob risks losing her looks, and persuades her to inform him if anybody asks questions. Later, he announces to his gang that he plans to marry Rose, since a wife cannot give evidence against her husband.

Ida goes to the police, who tell her that the file on Hale's death, which they attribute to heart failure, is



Pinkie looking perky: Wheatley, Hartnell, Attenborough, Stock

closed. Suspicious of Pinkie, remembering how scared of him Hale was, she questions Rose. The waitress immediately telephones to warn Pinkie. Spicer takes the message, but fails to deliver it. Pinkie devises an elaborate plan to have Spicer "dealt with" by rival hoodlum Colleoni. However, at the races, Colleoni's thugs turn on Pinkie as well, cutting his face. He escapes, and on his return home discovers that Spicer, too, is still alive. He pushes the old man over the bannisters to his death.

Pinkie and Rose marry in a registry office. When they pass a fairground booth where voices are recorded, she asks him to make a disc for her. On the record, he confesses that he hates her. Ida's investigations have failed to turn up any evidence about Hale's murder and she decides to leave town. Pinkie and the gang go to the pub to celebrate her forthcoming departure. Pinkie persuades Rose to take a walk with him on the pier, despite the stormy weather. He talks her into making a suicide pact with him. Just as she is about to shoot herself, Ida and the police turn up and Rose throws the gun away. Pinkie is cornered, and jumps to his death. Later, Rose talks to a nun about her late husband. She insists that Pinkie really did love her, and to prove it, she plays the disc he recorded, now badly damaged. The needle sticks on the words, "What you want me to say is I love you...I love you...I love you..."

When it was first released back in 1947, *Brighton Rock* stirred up a furore. "False, cheap, nasty sensationalism" was Reg Whitley's verdict in the *Daily Mirror*, and other critics shared his opinion. They felt that the film was a poor imitation of American gangster movies which offered an unpleasant and inaccurate view of the British. These days, *Brighton Rock* looks as British as tea and crumpets. For all its attempts at Warner Bros-style panache, it remains rooted in this little island, evoking a familiar world of pubs, bank holidays, shabby racecourses, double-decker buses and cheap boarding houses. Although ostensibly set in the 30s, its leading characters are easily recognisable as post-war types: the late 40s was the era of the spiv, the ne'er-do-well who made a comfortable living without working for it. William Hart-

nell and Nigel Stock, with their smart hats, shiny shoes and checked suits, fit the prototype exactly.

The gangster hero, Pinkie Brown, a delinquent with a horror of smoking and drinking, has a buttoned-up, repressed quality which puts him all too comfortably within the orbit of British leading men. He may have been nicknamed the "Young Scarface," but he has more in common with a character from the *Beano* than with Paul Muni or Edward G. Robinson. Still, Richard Attenborough delivers an exceptional performance. Fidgeting, playing cat's cradle, brandishing his razor as if it's a toy, he makes Pinkie appear perversely sympathetic.

The Boulting brothers attack the subject matter with considerable verve, producing some glorious set-pieces. In particular, the early sequence in which Kolley Kibber is pursued through Brighton by Pinkie and the gang, demonstrates a virtuosity absent from later, sedentary satires such as *I'm All Right Jack* and *Carlton-Brown of the FO*. Graham Greene's attempt to combine gangster yarn with Catholic morality fable is less successful here than in the novel. Neither Greene nor Terence Rattigan seems ideally placed to write a hard-boiled, sleazy thriller. Nevertheless, they compensate for what they lack in goodfella credibility with some wonderfully mannered dialogue and an array of eccentric character parts. There are the old gentlemen with newspapers on their heads and trousers rolled up, sitting by the pier, watching the music hall troupe perform; there's the pair of lonely spinsters, up from London for the day and keen to find a boyfriend, even one as bedraggled as Kolley Kibber; there is the corrupt, dipsomaniac lawyer, Prewitt. And, above all, there is Hermione Baddeley, saucy and voluptuous, knocking back pints of beer and dabbling in the supernatural. In one key scene, which sums up in a nutshell the difference between British and American gangster films, she visits the police to enquire about the mysterious circumstances surrounding Kolley Kibber's death. Shown Kibber's medical records, she looks pained when she discovers he had in-growing toe nails. Now that's not an affliction which ever bothered George Raft.

Geoffrey Macnab

RETROSPECTIVE

Il conformista
(The Conformist)

Italy/France/Germany 1970

Director: Bernardo Bertolucci

Certificate

18

Distributor

Contemporary

Production Companies

Mars Film (Rome)/

Marianne (Paris)/

Maran (Munich)

Producer

Maurizio Lodi-Fè

Associate Producer

Giovanni Bertolucci

Assistant Director

Aldo Lado

Screenplay

Bernardo Bertolucci

Based on the novel

by Alberto Moravia

Director of Photography

Vittorio Storaro

Colour

Technicolor

Editor

Franco Arcalli

Art Director

Nedo Azzini

Music/Music Director

Georges Delerue

Costume Design

Gitt Magrini

Cast

Jean-Louis Trintignant

Marcello Clerici

Stefania Sandrelli

Giulia

Gastone Moschin

Manganiello

Enzo Taroscio

Luca Quadri

Pierre Clémenti

Lino Seminara

Dominique Sanda

Anna Quadri

Christian Alegny

Raoul

José Quaglio

Italo

Milly

Marcello's Mother

Giuseppe Addobbati

Marcello's Father

Yvonne Sanson

Giulia's Mother

Fosco Giachetti

Colonel

Benedetto Benedetti

Minister

Antonio Maestri

Confessor

Alessandro Haber

Drunk Blind Man

Massimo Sarchielli

Blind Man

Pierangelo Civera

Franz

Pasquale Fortunato

Marcello as a boy

Gino Vagni Luca

Marta Lado

Carlo Gaddi

Franco Pellarani

Claudio CarPELLi

Umberto Silvestri

10,185 feet

113 minutes

Subtitles

Originally reviewed:

MFB December 1971

1938. Marcello Clerici is driven by an Italian political police agent, Manganiello, to supervise the assassination of his former philosophy professor, Luca Quadri, who directs anti-fascist missions from Paris. The journey is punctuated by flashbacks... Marcello is in a radio studio, discussing his impending marriage to Giulia with Italo, his blind, gay friend who broadcasts fascist sermons. Marcello offers to spy on Quadri for the political police while on his honeymoon in Paris. He visits Giulia to discuss the wedding, and then his mother, who takes drugs procured for her by her Japanese chauffeur, who is also her lover. On the way to his mother's house he is accosted by Manganiello, who informs him that they must contact another agent in Ventimiglia for further orders. Marcello has Manganiello beat up the chauffeur and order him to leave. He goes with his mother to see his father, who is in a lunatic asylum. When Marcello asks his father about his fascist past, the old man demands to be put in a straitjacket. Before the wedding, Marcello goes to confession, and remembers his boyhood seduction by a chauffeur, Lino, after which the latter was shot by Marcello, who believes he killed him. Next, Marcello is at a pre-nuptial party thrown for him by Italo and his blind friends. The two discuss the way fascism offers people an antidote to the anxiety of feeling 'different'.



Outside looking out: Jean-Louis Trintignant, Dominique Sanda

◀ On the way to Paris by train, Giulia recounts to Marcello her seduction at the age of 16 by an elderly family lawyer, and he makes love to her. In Ventimiglia, Marcello is told that Quadri is to be killed. In Paris, he visits Quadri and his wife Anna. He falls for the latter, but she is contemptuous of him. Marcello goes to see Anna at the ballet school where she teaches and learns that she knows he is in Paris to kill her husband. He returns to his hotel room to find Anna seducing Giulia. The Clericis and the Quadris go dancing at Joinville, followed by Manganiello. Anna and Quadri plan to spend the weekend in Savoy, and when Anna decides to stay behind in Paris with the Clericis, Marcello tells Manganiello Quadri's route, so that the assassination can take place during the journey without harming Anna. The next morning, Marcello receives a telephone call from Manganiello to say that Anna has left with her husband after all. He follows them with Manganiello, hoping to save Anna. They catch up with the Quadris' car, whereupon the assassins, emerging from the trees, stab Quadri and chase Anna, shooting her.

September 1943. Mussolini is deposed, and Marcello goes into the streets of Rome with Italo, where he encounters Lino picking up a male prostitute. Marcello denounces Lino as the murderer of Quadri and his wife in 1938. A crowd of anti-fascist revellers sweeps Italo away, and Marcello is left looking at the male prostitute.

● Few people can resist considering *Il conformista* Bertolucci's masterpiece. He has constructed from Alberto Moravia's novel an Oedipal story of enormous complexity, both thematically and stylistically, reordering a chronological narrative into a dream, in which Marcello's psyche is gradually penetrated as though in a psychotherapy session during the cocooned car journey to Savoy. Marcello is driven by anxiety about his sexuality, by his sense of having been betrayed by his 'fathers' and by a fruitless search for a position of 'normality' in the social order. Quadri is an idealist living a hedonistic life in Paris while

the struggle against fascism in Italy is the material one of the class struggle. A young man in 1970, Bertolucci questioned the credentials of middle-class anti-fascism, and killed his own father figures. The address and phone number at Quadri's apartment were in fact those of Jean-Luc Godard, and Quadri's account of Plato's myth of the cave can be understood as an expression of Godardian cinematic asceticism, in which images must be unmasked as purely images. Bertolucci opened on a sign advertising Renoir's *La vie est à nous* to manifest the need to make films that were accessible to a wide cinema-going public. To hide behind an austere idealism was to fail to engage with the real cinema audience. In the figure of Quadri, generational, political and cinematic issues are fused.

How well has *Il conformista* achieved its task of communication? The sheer mastery of the telling, the beauty of the images and of the camerawork, the control of the soundtrack, and the intensity with which the characters convey powerful psychic energies have all mesmerised audiences. Though much admired it remains slightly obscure. The title offers an interpretation: conformism. Marcello is an example of conformity, and the destruction it wreaks; fascism is conformism. The extent to which the film develops much more subtle themes than that can be overlooked. At the Berlin film festival in 1970, Bertolucci was persuaded to remove a four-minute episode, that of the pre-nuptial party, and the film has hitherto been distributed without this sequence. In this scene, Italo, blind and gay, says that he and Marcello share a sense of being 'different' from others. Normality is to enjoy the sight of a woman's behind. People need to feel part of a group. Marcello butts in: "Like a true fascist". This scene has now been restored. It may confirm viewers in the 'conformist' interpretation. But Marcello says "Like a true fascist" with an expression of disdain, and then removes himself from Italo's reach; the scene is shot with a basement window in the background, through which we see the legs of female prostitutes soliciting outside. Every time Marcello is

confronted with reality, it turns out to be other than the 'normality' he seeks: the minister is a philanderer, Giulia the mistress of an old man, his mother a junkie, Anna a lesbian, the secret police a collection of neurotic bunglers, anti-fascism a bourgeois confidence trick.... The way in which the film depicts fascist ideology as just a prolongation of bourgeois idealist fantasising is only comprehensible when you conceive of a materialist, marxist alternative to that middle-class ideology. Communists in 1970 could call upon a whole culture, for example that mixture of Freud and Marx that we find in Marcuse and the Frankfurt school, that would offer a devastating critique of Quadri's complicity in an ideology he shared in part with fascism. So is it the repressed, conformist Marcello wiping out the relaxed, freedom-loving Quadri? Is this how today's post-communist audiences will view the film? Will the restoration of the pre-nuptial party scene clarify matters, or will it reassure viewers in a banal interpretation of a film whose ambiguity previously forced them to work for a less simple interpretation?

Thematically, the scene offers plenty: blind people dancing and arguing about politics. The whole film plays on seeing what is not there, not seeing what is there, looking for what you want to see, having to see what you don't want to look at, looking at your own desire, trying not to see your own desire, screens, windows and objects that obstruct one's vision.... And the dialogue between Marcello and Italo with the prostitutes behind them is visually powerful and full of suggestion. But the dialogue itself clumsily brings out into rational discourse, and therefore reduces, what is elsewhere expressed by movement, sound, gesture and suggestion. Part of the scene is cluttered in a way that no other scene is; and it appears in the film without the subtle threads of transition – words, puns, sounds, images – which so effectively weld together the mosaic-like fragments of which the rest is constructed. Perhaps they were not so misguided at the 1970 Berlin film festival.

Chris Wagstaff

RETROSPECTIVE

The Third Man

United Kingdom 1949

Director: Carol Reed

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Electric Pictures

Production Company

London Films

Executive Producers

Alexander Korda

David O. Selznick

Producer

Carol Reed

Associate Producer

Hugh Perceval

Production Manager

T.S. Lyndon-Haynes

Assistant Director

Guy Hamilton

Screenplay/Story

Graham Greene

Director of Photography

Robert Krasker

Black and white

Additional Photography

John Wilcox

Stan Pavey

Camera Operators

Edward Scaife

Denys Coop

Editor

Oswald Hafenrichter

Art Director

Vincent Korda

Set Design

John Hawkesworth

Joseph Bato

Set Dresser

Dario Simoni

Music

Arranged and

performed by

Anton Karas

Wardrobe

Ivy Baker

Make-up

George Frost

Hair

Joe Shear

Sound Supervisor

John Cox

Sound Editor

Jack Drake

Sound Recordists

Bert Ross

Red Law

Austrian Adviser

Elizabeth Montagu

Cast

Joseph Cotten

Holly Martins

Alida Valli

Anna

Orson Welles

Harry Lime

Trevor Howard

Major Calloway

Bernard Lee

Sergeant Paine

Wilfrid Hyde-White

Crabbit

Erich Ponto

Doctor Winkel

Ernst Deutsch

Baron Kurtz

Siegfried Breuer

Popescu

Paul Hoerbiger

Porter

Annie Rosar

Porter's Wife

Hedwig Bleibtreu

Anna's Landlady

Herbert Halbig

Hansl

Alexis Chesnakov

Brodsky

Paul Hardtmuth

Hall Porter at Sacher's

9,360 feet

104 minutes

Originally reviewed:

MFB September 1949

● Holly Martins, an American writer of cowboy novels, arrives in Vienna where his old school friend Harry Lime has offered him a job. He is devastated to learn that Harry is dead, killed in a street accident. Major Calloway, a military policeman in the British occupying forces, tells him Harry was a racketeer, but Martins refuses to believe him. The account of Harry's death given by his associate Baron Kurtz contradicts that of the porter at Harry's apartment, who talks of a mysterious "third man" being present. Martins starts to investigate and meets Harry's girlfriend Anna, to whom he's at once attracted.

Anna, a Czech refugee for whom Harry obtained a forged passport, is arrested by Calloway and has her passport impounded before being released. Martins confronts Kurtz and his associates with the porter's evidence; when the porter is found murdered Martins falls under suspicion and has to flee from a hostile crowd. He takes refuge with Calloway, who gives him proof that Harry sold lethal diluted penicillin on the black market. Disgusted and depressed, Martins goes to Anna's apartment, but finds her still faithful to Harry's memory. On leaving, he spots Harry lurking in a doorway and gives chase, but loses him. He tells Calloway, who realises Harry (who faked

his own death) has escaped through the sewers.

Re-arrested, Anna risks being handed over to the Russians, but refuses to betray Harry. Through Kurtz, Martins contacts Harry, who blithely expounds his amoral philosophy. Martins does a deal with Calloway – Anna's freedom for Harry – but when Anna finds out she furiously rejects the idea. To stiffen Martins' resolve, Calloway shows him some of Harry's victims in a children's hospital. Martins fixes a rendezvous with Harry, and when he shows up Calloway and his men give chase. Harry flees into the sewers where he is cornered and wounded, and Martins gives him the coup de grace. After Harry's funeral Martins waits for Anna, but she ignores him and walks straight past.

It is hard now to credit that there was a time when Carol Reed was seriously touted as the world's greatest living director. Still, watching *The Third Man* (or rather re-watching it for the umpteenth time), the idea does not seem quite so fantastic. Of all his films, this is the one where every element – people, place, subject matter – seems to have come together in one flawless, preordained package.

It wasn't so, of course. Like so many sanctified movie classics, *The Third Man* nearly did not happen that way at all, and somewhere in the same alternative universe that harbours a *Casablanca* starring Ronald Reagan and Ann Sheridan there lurks a project called *Night in Vienna*, with a conventional symphonic score by William Alwyn and starring Noel Coward as Harry Lime. Luckily Reed ignored the egregious advice of David Selznick ("Who the hell is going to a film called *The Third Man*?"), unearthed Anton Karas from a Viennese nightclub, talked the hypochondriac Welles into risking pneumonia in the sewers – and created what's generally hailed as one of the few undisputed masterpieces of British cinema.

Undisputed, that is, except by those who question its Britishness on the theory that Welles dominated the direction of the film just as his character (on screen for barely 15 minutes) dominates the action. That Welles wrote most of his own dialogue (including the famous "cuckoo-clock" speech lifted from Molnar), is not in doubt, nor that he suggested a few set-ups and camera angles. But the stylistic affinities with Reed's other great night-town film, *Odd Man Out* (1946), the slick black streets, melodramatic lighting and grotesque, tilted framings, are close enough to show that if Reed was influenced by Welles's style, it had happened well before they worked together on *The Third Man*.

What Welles did bring to the film – besides his finest performance outside his own work – was an obsession he shared with Greene: the preoccupation with betrayal and lost innocence. In *The Third Man* this theme, which recurs in the work of both men, gains through their collaboration an inten-

sity that transforms the film from the "simple entertainment" Greene claimed to have intended into something far harsher and more poignant. "He never grew up. The world grew up around him," says Anna, speaking of Harry Lime, but the same goes for Holly Martins. Their similar first names (Anna several times confuses them) mark them out as mirror-images, twin retarded adolescents locked into their boyhood patterns of mutual dependence and betrayal. In the novella of *The Third Man* (not the source of the script, but Greene's preparation for it), Calloway reflects, "Evil was like Peter Pan – it carried with it the horrifying and horrible gift of eternal youth." Welles' playing of the Prater Wheel scene conveys, behind its surface jauntiness, a sense of that same horror – the emptiness of the moral abyss.

The accusation commonly levelled at Reed, that as a director he was only as good as his collaborators, may paradoxically be borne out by the excellence of *The Third Man*, since here he had the best. Not only Greene and Welles, but Korda (who came up with the original idea), Karas, Robert Krasker's cinematography – and the shattered city of Vienna itself. Karas' score may be cheap music but (as that *Third Man* manqué, Noel Coward, reminded us)

cheap music can be very potent, and the zither's plangent, wheedling tone, its brittle gaiety and air of false bonhomie, perfectly captures the weary, insinuating *zeitgeist* of post-war Vienna. Krasker (who had also photographed *Odd Man Out*) turns the ruined city, where wedding-cake baroque cohabits with rubble, into a setting for Grand Opera, a latter-day *Götterdämmerung*. Welles' first appearance, the white face looming out of the pitch-black doorway, has become justly famous, but his final entrance is equally impressive: doubly elevated, at the top of the frame and high on a mountain of rubble, his dark-coated figure looms over the wounded body of Vienna like a demon king. In *The Third Man* melodrama attains sublimity.

But it would have remained mere melodrama had it not been shot on location. Perhaps it took a film-maker hailing, like Reed, from another war-shattered city to see Vienna (as Rossellini did Berlin in *Germany Year Zero*) as so telling an index of the intolerable burden of post-war guilt. The sour decadence of the dismembered city, its professional charm worn precariously thin, infects the whole film, including the casting. *The Third Man* is superbly cast, down to its smallest role – even the elegant, resentful lady toted around by Wilfrid Hyde-White's British

Council official is precisely characterised, though she never speaks a word – but it gains immeasurably from its use of Austrian actors. There's a painful authenticity about Ernst Deutsch's phony aristo, with his agonised, ingratiating smile, or Paul Hörbiger as the ill-fated porter, that suggests direct personal experience of what they're enacting.

The most imaginative casting coup, though, is the eerie goblinchild Hansi (Herbert Halbig), a being conjured up, with his Grimm Brothers name, from the darkest forest-bound recesses of the Teutonic psyche. Moon-faced and appallingly unlovable, with the blank accusing gaze of one who has seen too much too young, he seems – even more than Harry Lime himself – to embody the malign, corrupted spirit of the city.

"Death's at the bottom of everything," says Trevor Howard's trench-coated cop. *The Third Man*, a film set between two funerals (both of them for the same man) is haunted, permeated by death. Yet like Lime, a killer of the worst kind whom it's impossible to dislike (and who achieved posthumous rehabilitation as hero of a popular television series), the film's disenchanted romanticism exerts an irresistible charm. Nearly half a century on, that charm hasn't diminished in the least.

Philip Kemp



Touch of Harry: Orson Welles

RETROSPECTIVE

Tokyo Nagaremono (Tokyo Drifter)

Japan 1966

Director: Seijun Suzuki

Certificate	Ryuji Kita
Not yet issued	Kurata
Distributor	Hideaki Esumi
ICA Projects	Otsuka
Production Company	Tamio Kawachi
Nikkatsu	"Viper" Tatsu
Producer	Isao Tamagawa
Tetsuro Nakagawa	Umetani
Production Manager	Michio Hino
Yasufusa Okada	Yoshii
Assistant Director	Tomoko Hamakawa
Masami Kuzuu	Mutsuko
Screenplay	Takeshi Izumi
Yasunori 'Kohan' Kawauchi	Detective Sakai
Based on his story	Tsuyoshi Yoshida
Director of Photography	Keiichi
Shigeyoshi Mine	Hiroshi Cho
Nikkatsu-Scope	Kumamoto
In colour	Eiji Go
Colour Effects	Tanaka
Masaru Mori	Yuzo Kiura
Editor	Fujimura
Shinya Inoue	Shinzo Shibata
Art Director	Otokichi
Takeo Kimura	Shuntaro Tamamura
Music	Koyanagi
So Kaburagi	Masatoshi Takase
Songs	Hiroshi Midorikawa
"Tokyo Nagaremono" by Gendai Kanou, Kazuko Kawauchi, performed by Tetsuya Watari; "Blue Night in Akasaka" performed by Yuko Shikaoi; "Otoko No Elegy" performed by Hideaki Nitani	Kosuke Hisamatsu
Sound Recordist	Ikuro Nikaido
Yoshinobu Akino	Masaaki Honme
Action Arranger	Shiro Tonami
Masatoshi Takase	Sen Kobayashi
	Mitsuru Sawa
	Iwae Arai
	Yoko Yokota
	Hiroshi Takao
	Yoshinori Oba
	Tessen Nakahira
	Ken Mizoguchi
	Tadayuki Kitakami

7,470 feet

83 minutes

Subtitles

Cast

Tetsuya Watari

Tetsuya Hondo

Chieko Matsubara

Chiharu

Hideaki Natani

Kenji Aizawa

("Shooting Star")

Tokyo, 1966. Gang boss Kurata decides to go straight and move into real estate; with a mortgage from underworld banker Yoshii, he buys a prestigious high-rise building. His right-hand man Tetsuya Hondo, obliged to go straight too, allows thugs from the Otsuka gang to beat him up, and guarantees Yoshii's mortgage with his life. But Otsuka and his hit-man "Viper" Tatsu lure Yoshii to their headquarters in the Beatbox Club and intimidate him into signing the mortgage over to them. Tetsuya rushes to the club to intervene, but is tricked into taking a fall and left for dead. He revives and escapes in time to rescue Kurata from Otsuka and Tatsu, but Kurata accidentally shoots and kills Tatsu's girlfriend Mutsuko in the fracas. Tetsuya loyally offers to take the rap for the killing, but Kurata tells him to leave Tokyo instead. He calls his girlfriend Chiharu, singer at the Alulu Club, to say goodbye, but hangs up when she answers.

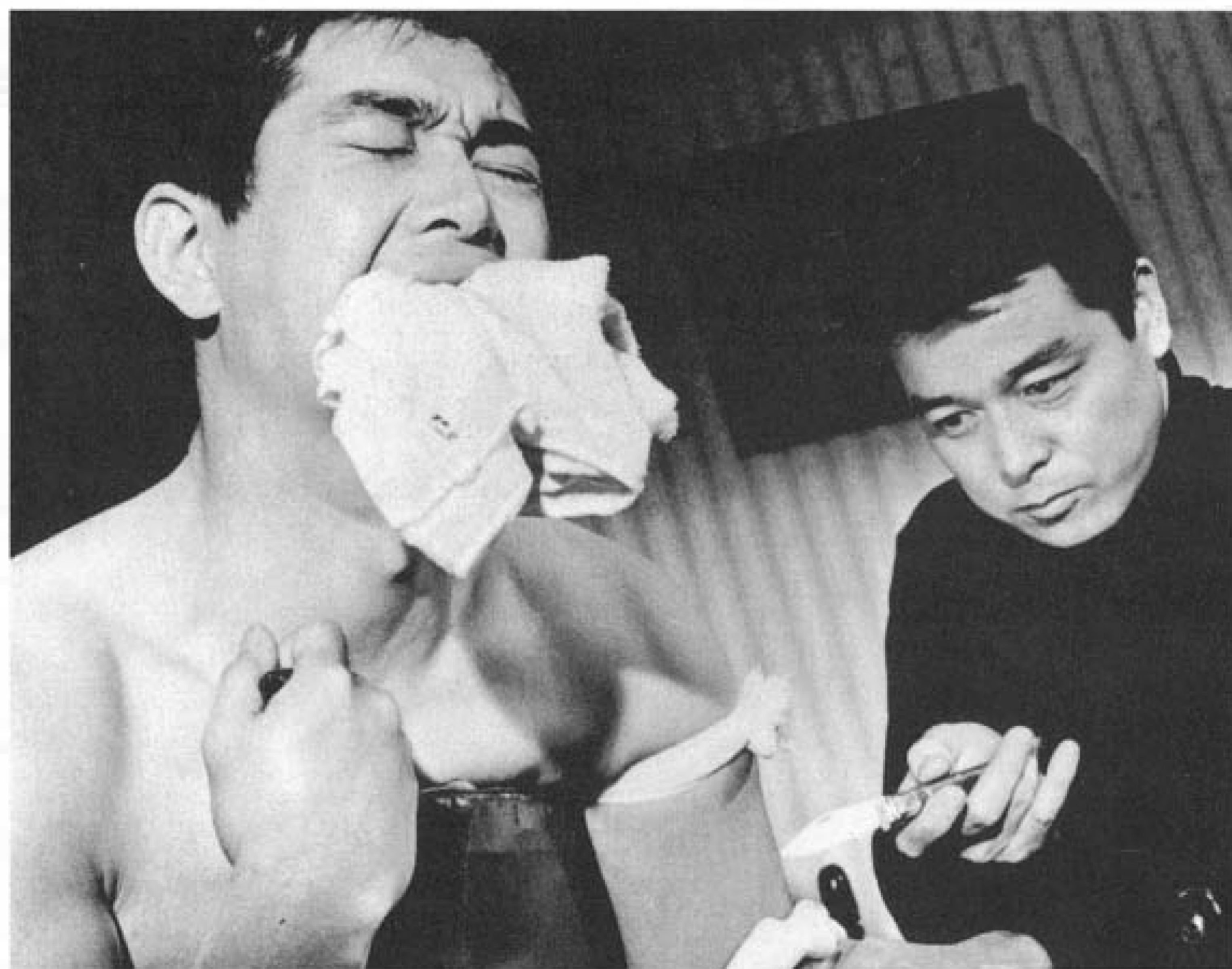
Tetsuya takes the train to Niigata, pursued by both Detective Sakai and the vengeful Tatsu. Sakai arrests him,

but he is freed by members of the local South Group, who want his help in their running battle with the rival North Group. When the North Group launches a midnight raid, however, Tetsuya stays out of it and lets the hicks wipe each other out. Next day Tatsu confronts him and demands a gun duel; each wounds the other, and Tatsu is left disfigured. Longtime drifter Kenji Aizawa (known as "Shooting Star") steps in to help Tetsuya remove Tatsu's bullet from his arm and offers some unwelcome thoughts on the psychology of drifting. Tetsuya is resuming his wanderings when Chiharu arrives in Niigata, looking for him; he stoically refuses to acknowledge her.

Tetsuya ends up in Kyushu and heads for Sasebo, where Kurata's old friend Umetani runs the Saloon Western. He finds both Aizawa and Tatsu in residence already, and when a brawl breaks out between the bargirls and customers Tatsu tries to kill him. His shot misses and, under pressure from Aizawa, Tatsu shoots himself. In Tokyo, meanwhile, Otsuka and Kurata decide to bury their differences in a merger and agree that Tetsuya must be wasted for their future safety. Kurata telephones Umetani and orders him to carry out the hit. But Aizawa (who foresaw this treachery) helps Tetsuya to escape. Tetsuya flies back to Tokyo for a showdown with Kurata and Otsuka in the Alulu Club. Unscathed himself, he shoots Otsuka and wounds Kurata. He formally resigns from Kurata's service, and Kurata commits suicide. Tetsuya embraces Chiharu, but then tells her that a drifter needs no woman and disappears into the neon night of the city.

Seijun Suzuki's absurdist thriller, certainly one of the most brilliant genre movies ever made, really needs to be seen in context to be enjoyed to the max. Suzuki was contracted to Nikkatsu in 1954, and he directed 40 movies for the faltering major between 1958 and his peremptory dismissal in 1967; all of them were assignments, and most were intended for release as B-features in double bills. Suzuki ploughed this furrow with mounting boredom and dissatisfaction until 1963, when his encounters with kindred spirits such as the production designer Takeo Kimura and the cinematographers Kazue Nagatsuka and Shigeyoshi Mine led him to strike out in his own direction. Given formula material that often had only the most tenuous links with 'reality' in the first place, he began pushing his films into a register of bold, theatrical artifice, experimenting with colour, light and space while paring down plot structures to their naked essentials.

As a result, his last 13 films for Nikkatsu amount to a body of work unique in Japanese cinema and phenomenal by any standards. The smarter Japanese critics and the student audience loved these films from the moment they were released; it's a minor scandal of cinema history that it has taken so long for them to win a recognition outside Japan.



Bite the bullet: Tetsuya Watari, Hideaki Natani

Around half the films Suzuki made for Nikkatsu between 1963 and 1967 were *yakuza* thrillers (the others were off-beat literary adaptations), and *Tokyo Drifter* was the last but one. Unlike the subsequent *Branded to Kill*, it more or less respects generic conventions: the callow hero, his predicament, his intoning of a mournful ballad over the credits and his scarred survival of a series of double-crosses are all genre staples, as is the background story of the shift from gang warfare to outwardly respectable big business. Without parodying or subverting this material, Suzuki gives it an edge of consistent absurdity by pushing much of the iconography and many of the motifs to a hyperbolic extreme. Hence the way that the hero Tetsuya opens and closes the film in a stain-resistant white suit and is seen in between in an incongruous sky-blue suit and white loafers; and the way that the chief heavy Otsuka cannot enter a scene without the camera (suddenly hand-held) lurching in for a tight close-up of his wrap-around shades; and the way that Tetsuya at one point *sings* the theme-song on-screen to announce his presence and at another *whistles* it to taunt his adversary. Examples are, in fact, legion, and they achieve the improbable effect of making the film wildly funny without for a moment preventing it from delivering its generic punches.

Suzuki's own rationale for the hyperbolic imagery and incidents is that they were his way of adding interest to essentially banal material. Ultimately, though, his play with the film's formal and plastic elements goes beyond freshening up a tired genre. *Tokyo Drifter* anthologises a number of startling visual coups that Suzuki and his collaborators had introduced into earlier films, from *Youth of the Beast* (Yaju no Seishun, 1963) to *One Generation of Tattoos* (Irezumi Ichidai, 1965), but their profusion here lifts the movie into a realm of lyricism that approaches delirium. The process begins in the monochrome pre-credits sequence showing Tetsuya submitting to a beating in a dockside rail yard. The entire sequence

is printed on high-contrast stock and tinted olive-green; at its climax, before he warns the departing thugs not to make him angry, the bloodied hero looks down and sees a broken toy gun on the ground – and the toy is bright orange. A few scenes later, Suzuki is trumping those clashing colour-values by setting a shoot-out against a blood-red backdrop – which instantly bleaches white at the moment that Mutsuko is shot. And then there are the shots from above and below the action, not to mention the scenes in the Alulu Club, where the light changes from red to white to yellow according to the emotional temperature of the scene.

This degree of flagrant and rapturous artifice is in perfect synch with the way that Suzuki ruthlessly pares away conventional bridging scenes from the plot, propelling the film from one *outré* scene to the next. An early scene in which Tetsuya shakes up some hoods by taking them for a hair-raising drive is reduced to a series of disconnected shots of dangerous driving; the meaning without the boredom of pedantic continuity.

Two interpolated fight scenes (the clash between two factions of Niigata bumpkins who fancy themselves as latter-day samurai, and the brawl that demolishes the Saloon Western) are comic set-pieces that have nothing to do with the plot but everything to contribute to the tone of disrespect. And each of "Viper" Tatsu's duels with Tetsuya is more oblique and unresolved than the one before.

What is finally so remarkable about Suzuki's film is that it attains this level of abstraction, colour expressionism and spatial and narrative disorientation without losing touch with its own identity as a B-feature thriller. It's as if Powell and Pressburger and Jean-Luc Godard had collaborated on a Joseph H. Lewis movie. Amazing that an unsung genre movie made nearly 30 years ago in Japan still has such freshness and vitality, and that it still radiates such a strong sense of the cinema's latent possibilities.

Tony Rayns

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Mark Kermode and Peter Dean highlight their ten video choices of the month, and overleaf review, respectively, the rest of the rental and retail releases



VIDEO CHOICE



Symphony of loneliness: Juliette Binoche in 'Three Colours: Blue'

Three Colours: Blue (Trois Couleurs: Bleu)

Director Krzysztof Kieślowski/France 1993

A powerful, moving and truly great film. Great care has been taken with the transfer of the film print onto video so that, even on the small screen, the composition and luminosity of Kieślowski's images remain arresting. The plot centres on Julie (Juliette Binoche), a composer's wife rebuilding her life after a car crash that kills her husband and daughter, while her former lover Olivier (Benoît Régent) tries to complete the late musician's last project – a concerto for Europe. The story may appear slight but the resonances run far deeper. It's unsurprising that Kieślowski returns to the musical world of his

earlier movie *The Double Life of Véronique*, since his film-making increasingly appears to "aspire to the condition of music." Details are imbued with their own significance and, by orchestrating sequences through sophisticated montage, Kieślowski creates a film which exists in its own time and logic. The unfinished concerto running through the film scores Julie's dislocated existence until, at the conclusion, the various characters whose lives she has touched, and tried to remain free from, are united by the finished music – brought together by Julie's acts of love when she thought she had none to give. The use of music in the film may have precedents but the conducting is all Kieślowski's. (S&S November 1993)

● Rental; Artificial Eye ART 085; Price £15.99; Widescreen; Certificate 15

Return of the Living Dead 3

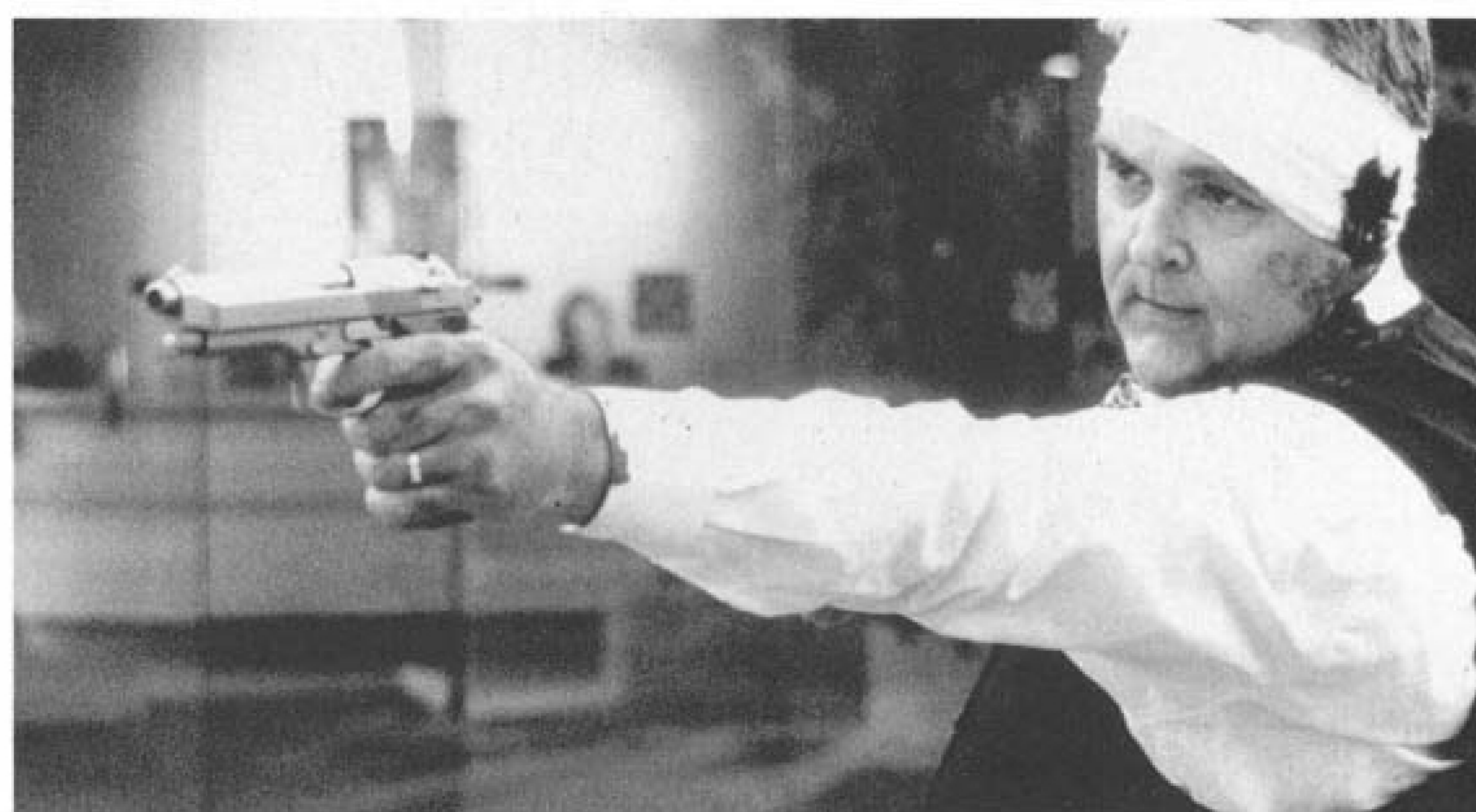
Director Brian Yuzna/USA 1993

Easily outstripping both its predecessors, this third instalment in the *Return* series boasts a coherent script, fully-rounded characters and grim black comedy. Newcomer Mindy Clarke makes the most of her role as feisty heroine Julie, a teenager killed in a motorbike accident. Revived by her love-struck boyfriend using the dreaded 2-4-5 Trioxin, Julie experiences the bloody hunger of the undead. Although Yuzna exploits the gruesome humour and visceral potential of the scenario to the full (rampaging body parts and feasting zombies abound), he manages to anchor the action in a credible story. There is anguish in the lovers' separation-through-decay – likened by Clarke to the drug-addled destruction of Nancy Spungen and Sid Vicious. Impressive effects by Steve Johnson and Gerry Lively's moody blue photography lend pleasure to the pain.

● Rental; Hi Fliers HFV 8254; Certificate 18; 93 minutes; Producers Brian Yuzna, Gary Schmoeller; Screenplay John Penney; Lead Actors Mindy Clarke, J. Trevor Edmond, Kent McCord, Basil Wallace



Femme fatale: 'Return of the Living Dead 3'



New world horror: 'Body Melt'

Body Melt

Director Philip Brophy/Australia 1993

Although never quite achieving the delirious madness to which it aspires, Philip Brophy's mind-bending debut is an inventive and laudibly tasteless journey into the surreal. In the quiet Australian suburbs, a designer-drug that alters the mind and the body is taking over people's lives. Make-up artist Bob McCarron has a field day with the limited special effects budget, conjuring up bizarre defilements of the flesh –

mutant placentas, door-stopper tongues and facial reconstructions – which raise a retching chuckle. Although comparisons with New Zealand filmmaker Peter Jackson's *Braindead* are inevitable, *Body Melt* shows a style that is all Brophy's and secures the Antipodes a place in the horror film world.

● Rental; First Independent VA 20208; Certificate 18; 81 minutes; Producers Rod Bishop, Daniel Scharf, Lars Michalak; Screenplay Philip Brophy, Rod Bishop; Lead Actors Gerard Kennedy, Andrew Daddo, Ian Smith, Vince Gil

Beyond Gravity

Director Garth Maxwell/New Zealand 1988

Included as part of the gay video compilation *Boys on Film 3*, this remarkably assured short from Maxwell which bodes well for his debut feature *Jack Be Nimble*. Richard (Robert Pollock) is a lab technician whose obsession with astronomy is fuelled by his closet homosexuality. At the local library he meets Johnny (Iain Rea), who returns Richard's lost diary the next day having not only read it, but annotated every page. The two men become lovers, but problems arise when a present to Richard of a leather jacket turns out to be stolen and Johnny's impending emigration to Rome casts a shadow. Sharply directed, well acted and very funny, this excellent film deserves a far wider audience than it is likely to get. Taking a refreshingly entertaining rather than polemical approach to the subject, it can be seen as a gay reworking of Nicholas Ray's *Rebel Without a Cause*.

● Rental; Dangerous To Know DTK 0011; Price £14.99; Widescreen; Certificate 18; 52 minutes; Producer James H. Wallace; Screenplay Garth Maxwell, Graham Adams; Lead Actors Robert Pollock, Iain Rea, Lucy Sheehan, Alex Van Dam

Three Shorts by Hal Hartley (Ambition/Theory of Achievement/ Surviving Desire)

Director Hal Hartley/USA 1989/1991

Almost every line in a Hal Hartley script, it seems, is a question or an answer. Smart, white young urbanites trade universal truths or quiz each other while background musical motifs mirror the characters' lack of direction. After Hartley's disappointing *Simple Men*, these three earlier shorts are a drop of the real



Deep conversations: Martin Donovan, Mary Ward in 'Surviving Desire'

stuff, with epigrammatic dialogue spat out and left hanging in the air, complex characters endlessly deliberating existence, future, the nature of ambition, faith, love, and having flashes of self-awareness. *Surviving Desire* is the more substantial of the three. Made for US television's American Playhouse, it stars Martin Donovan (*Trust*) as an English professor who falls in love with a student (Mary Ward) – a springboard for more pontification and questioning. The courting scenes resemble out-takes from *Breakfast at Tiffany's* or *Barefoot in the Park*, while the humour veers mighty close to Woody Allen. (S&S February 1994)

● Retail; Tartan Video TVT 1118; Price £15.99; Certificate 15

Les Amants (The Lovers)

Director Louis Malle/France 1958

This tale of an extra-marital relationship, which caused quite a stir at the time, seems quaint by today's standards and, in its consummation sequence (flowing white gowns in the moonlight set to Brahms), rather camp. Jeanne Tournier (Jeanne Moreau), a bored provincial housewife who prefers the polo circles of Paris to being the wife of a Dijon newspaper magnate, starts an affair with the dashing Raoul thanks to her friend

Maggy. So as to make Raoul look foppish in front of his wife, Jeanne's husband invites them all to the Tourniers' country mansion for the weekend. When a stranger gives Jeanne a lift after her car breaks down, he manages to change Jeanne's view of her world, especially her perception of the boring life with her husband. The acting, camerawork and *that* love scene (which Truffaut called "The first night of love in the cinema") make this essential viewing.

(MFB No. 311)

● Retail; Electric Pictures EP 0052; Price £15.99; Subtitles; B/W; Widescreen; Certificate 15



Bourgeois ennui: Jeanne Moreau stars in Louis Malle's 'Les Amants'



Woodard, McDonnell: 'Passion Fish'

Passion Fish

Director John Sayles/USA 1993

With his extraordinary ability to conduct a group of players without allowing any character to become incidental, John Sayles could be considered the Orson Welles of the 90s. Among the finely etched personalities in his finest work since *Return of the Secaucus Seven* are: an ex-TV soap star returning to her home in the South after a crippling accident (Mary McDonnell); an African-American nurse with a mysterious past (Alfre Woodard); and a heroic swamp guide (David Straithairn). Thrown together in the backwaters of Louisiana's bayous, these disparate souls examine their pasts, reinvent the present and begin to mould brighter futures. Miraculously, the movie is never maudlin or worthy – instead it has a script that is sharp and sassy, performances that are terrific and a sense of place that is delicately evoked by cameraman Roger Deakins.

(S&S September 1993)

● Rental; Curzon CV 0035; Certificate 15



Deceptive appearances: Robert De Niro

This Boy's Life

Director Michael Caton-Jones/USA 1993

After a derisory theatrical release this adaptation of Tobias Wolff's autobiography is ready for reappraisal. Uprooted from one anonymous town after another, mother and son Ellen Barkin and Leonardo DiCaprio (both excellent) wind up in the ominously named town of Concrete, Washington. Here, budding father-figure Robert De Niro is revealed as a resentful tyrant whose love for his new wife and son can only be expressed through discipline. In a break with past form, Caton-Jones steers clear of sentimentality, creating a harsh and entirely credible picture of life in a hellish hick town. Equally impressive is De Niro's superb portrayal of an ordinary, unlikeable man under extreme stress, a finely-honed performance which matches his triumph in *Mad Dog and Glory*. All this, and great photography by David Watkin, make this a gem.

(S&S October 1993)

● Rental; Warner V012650; Certificate 15

Glitterbug

Director Derek Jarman/UK 1994

A montage of Derek Jarman's Super-8 footage from 1970 to 1986, capturing his private and public lives, with a specially composed score by Brian Eno. One of the segments includes *Studio Bankside* (featured on the *Projections* compilation) and early avant-garde films in which Jarman experiments with film speed, stop-start cinematography, exposure and film grain. Backstage location footage from Jarman's early feature films *Sebastiane* and *Jubilee* merge with more experimental work, prefiguring the style of *The Last of England*. Tilda Swinton, Michael Clarke, Genesis P-Orridge and other members of the Jarman 'set' are caught in various 'home movies'. Eno's music for this film has not been released elsewhere, but it sounds closest to the 'Nerve Net' album sessions. Of interest for showing us the places and people which informed Jarman's work.

● Retail; Dangerous To Know DTK 011; Price £15.99; 53 minutes; Certificate TBC; Producer James Mackay; Music Brian Eno



Derek Jarman's 'Glitterbug'

The Thing Called Love

Director Peter Bogdanovich/USA 1993

An appealing romantic drama about four aspiring Country and Western singers trying their darnedest to get on Nashville's bumpy Yellow Brick Road. Samantha Mathis leaves New York for an audition at the legendary Bluebird Café where, after meeting cool singer River Phoenix, singer-songwriter Dermot Mulroney and flighty Sandra Bullock, she is rejected. A relationship movie which is closer to *Cheers* than to Robert Altman's definitive film on the subject, *Nashville*. Bogdanovich's nondescript, almost TV-movie style, which he uses to generate intimacy among his actors, seems to have condemned the movie to video in the UK – that, or the fact that it's a Country and Western film not starring Dolly Parton. But it is better than the director's recent efforts, and you would have to look to *Mask* to find him examining middle-American dreams as well as he does here. Phoenix's performance emphasises Hollywood's loss of a major star, but acting plaudits go to Mathis.

● Rental; CIC VHB 2894; Certificate 15; 100 minutes; Producer John Davis; Screenplay Carol Heikkinen; Lead Actors River Phoenix, Samantha Mathis, Dermot Mulroney, Sandra Bullock



Country boy: River Phoenix

Reviews in Monthly Film Bulletin and Sight and Sound are cited in parentheses. A retail video that has previously been reviewed in the rental section will be listed only and the film review reference given. The term ‘Premiere’ refers to a film that has had no prior UK theatrical release and is debuting on video.  denotes closed captioning facility

Rental

The Cement Garden

Director Andrew Birkin; UK/Germany/France 1992; Tartan Video TVT 1126; Certificate 18 Birkin's adaptation of Ian McEwan's novel of incestuous passion is a darkly erotic affair which caused outrage in some European countries. Amid stark suburban surroundings a pubescent boy masturbates as his father, and then his mother, die. After burying their parents in the cellar, the siblings Jack and Julie (Andrew Robertson, Charlotte Gainsbourg) assume parental responsibilities while circling towards an inevitable, forbidden embrace. Charlotte Gainsbourg is extraordinary (her French accent unnoticeable) while the overall tone is weird and electrifying. (S&S November 1993)

Century

Director Stephen Poliakoff; UK 1993; Electric Pictures EO 0049; Certificate 15 Starting his new position at an experimental medical clinic, a young doctor (Clive Owen) finds himself at odds with the dubious methods of the head doctor (Charles Dance), while exploring the new-found wonders – mostly personified by Miranda Richardson – that the future offers. Poliakoff's third film as a director highlights the ambitions of those faced with a new century of promise, drawing acute parallels with our own impending millennium. (S&S January 1994)

Champions: The Mighty Ducks

Director Stephen Herek; USA 1992; Disney D115152; Certificate PG A fairly lame attempt at an uplifting kids' movie which even the talented Stephen Herek (*Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*, *The Three Musketeers*) can't rescue from the doldrums. Uptight yuppie Gordon Bombay (Emilio Estevez) relives a childhood hockey trauma and relearns the sporting values of his childhood. (S&S August 1993)

The Crush

Director Alan Shapiro; USA 1993; Warner V012926; Certificate 15 Sub-*Lolita* straight-to-video trash which unaccountably gained a theatrical release here. While renting a garden cottage a journalist (Nick Nolte) is pursued by the owners' deranged teenage daughter (Alicia Silverstone). Sleaze-meister Shapiro directs with lascivious verve, drooling over Silverstone who performs passably in a role obviously designed for Drew Barrymore. (S&S October 1993)

Dennis

Director Nick Castle; USA 1993; Warner V012803; Certificate PG A palatable children's comedy (based on the American comic strip *Dennis the Menace*) lent a mature air by Walter

Matthau's grouchy performance as neighbourly Mr Wilson. Castle excels at directing the slapstick violence, with Matthau and fiendish villain Christopher Lloyd suffering as severely as any John Hughes stooge. Bum-kicking fun. (S&S September 1993)

The Firm

Director Sydney Pollack; USA 1993; Warner VHB 2819; Certificate 15 Lumbering and over-long (two-and-a-half hours) thriller penned by John Grisham first as a script and subsequently as a novel. Lawyer Mitch McDeere (Tom Cruise) becomes trapped between the mob and the FBI while investigating corruption in his Memphis legal firm. Gene Hackman outshines everyone in his strong supporting role but fails to rescue the project. (S&S October 1993) 

The Hawk

Director David Hayman; UK 1992; Columbia TriStar CVT 21758; Certificate 15 Peter Ransley's adaptation of his serial-killer novel is an infuriating blend of misleading fact (details from the real Yorkshire Ripper case) and clumsy fiction. Beleaguered Helen Mirren starts out as a Sonia Sutcliffe act-alike, but transforms into a *Prime Suspect*-style avenging angel. The result smacks of ill-considered exploitation, which was certainly not the makers' intention. (S&S December 1993)

The Secret Garden

Director Agnieszka Holland; UK 1993; Warner V012991; Certificate U Frances Hodgson Burnett's classic children's tale gets the American Zoetrope treatment with impressive results. Plaudits are due to Roger Deakins for his splendid photography, while director Holland demonstrates a flair for fantasy which avoids cuteness. (S&S November 1993)

Sleepless in Seattle

Director Nora Ephron; USA 1993; 20.20 Vision NVT 19799; Certificate PG A gorgeous, schmaltzy, cine-literate comedy, beautifully written by Nora Ephron and enticingly played by Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan. Two lonely hearts fall in love without ever meeting. Although Ephron's direction lacks the subtle touch of Rob Reiner (who makes a cameo appearance) the dry wit of the script's central conceit saves it from mere sentimentality. (S&S October 1993)



A tale of incest: ‘The Cement Garden’

The Wedding Banquet (Xiyan)

Director Ang Lee; Taiwan/USA 1993; Certificate 15 Despite the potential for political correctness, Ang Lee's New York comedy about an arranged marriage between a homosexual Taiwanese man who needs to appease his parents and a straight Chinese woman who needs a green card retains an admirable lightness of touch. The result is a fraudulent wedding banquet of farcical proportions. The trio of central characters, although variably played, provides an engaging forum for discussing issues of race, sexuality and custom without proselytising. (S&S October 1993)

Rental premiere

Back in Action

Director Steve Dimarco; USA 1993; Guild 8739; Certificate 18; 89 minutes; Producer George Flak; Screenplay Karl Schiffman; Lead Actors Billy Blanks, Roddy Piper, Bobbie Phillips, Damon D'Oliviero Mid-range martial-arts star Blanks teams up with Piper for a by-numbers action vehicle. Detective Rossi (Piper) forms a reluctant alliance with an ex-Special Forces agent (Blanks) to bring down notorious drug smugglers the Kasanjian gang.

Bounty Tracker

Director Kurt Anderson; USA 1994; Reflective RE 7006; Certificate 18; 86 minutes; Producer Pierre David; Screenplay Caroline Olson; Lead Actors Lorenzo Lamas, Matthias Hues, Cyndi Pass The delightfully fiendish Hues sharpens his 'evil foreigner' act as assassin Erik Gauss, leader of an elite gang of murderers. Bounty hunter Johnny Damone (Lamas) turns his attentions to Erik when the wicked one kills his brother.

Deep Down

Director John Travers; USA 1993; 20.20 Vision NVT 21365; Certificate 18; 82 minutes; Producers John Morrissey, Cassian Elwes; Screenplay John Travers, Alice Horrigan; Lead Actors Tanya Roberts, George Segal, Kristoffer Tabori, Chris Young, Paul Le Mat Tanya Roberts may be stiff, but Segal and Young inject a degree of class into this up-market trash. Besotted by his tempting neighbour, a Hollywood

newcomer resolves to save the woman from her psycho husband. Segal's casual killing of a drinking buddy in the opening moments establishes an undercurrent of menace.

Double Suspicion

Director Paul Ziller; USA 1993; Medusa MO 413; Certificate 18; 91 minutes; Producer Robert Vince; Screenplay Michael Berlin, Eric Estrin; Lead Actors Gary Busey, Kim Cattrall, Darlan Fluegel, Jeff Griggs A feud between a male-stripper-cum-serial-killer (Griggs) and an ex-cop (Busey) provides the backdrop for an interestingly inverted 'erotic thriller' (the bodies on display are all male). Ziller punctuates the plot with strip-club action and shoots the killer's fantasies with relish. Cattrall and Busey cut strangely straight-laced figures amid the louche fun and the plot is risible, but the gyrating jocks make up for it.

The Mommy Market

Director Tia Brellis; USA 1993; FoxVideo 8564; Certificate PG; 79 minutes; Producer Rafaella De Laurentiis; Screenplay Tia Brelis; Lead Actors Sissy Spacek, Anna Chlumsky, Aaron Michael Metchick, Asher Metchick Tired of their nagging mother, a group of brats led by Chlumsky use a magic spell to replace her. Unsurprisingly, after test-driving an array of exotic new mums (played with comic aplomb by Spacek) they realise the solid value of their former family life.

Save Me

Director Alan Roberts; USA 1993; EV EVV 1280; Certificate 18; 89 minutes; Producer Alan Amiel; Screenplay Neil Ronco; Lead Actors Harry Hamlin, Lysette Anthony, Michael Ironside, Bill Nunn Businessman Jim Steven (Hamlin), his marriage and career in ruins, is snared by alluring mystery woman Ellie (Anthony), who claims to be trapped by psychiatrist Oliver Moran (Ironside). You don't need a Phd to guess the inevitable plot twist, but Roberts jumps deftly through the genre hoops. Anthony is surprisingly accomplished, enjoying her character's repressed sense of lunacy and performing the sex scenes with her credibility intact.

Sex, Love and Cold Hard Cash

Director Harry S. Longstreet; USA 1993; CIC VHA 1662; Certificate 15; 82 minutes; Producer Renee Longstreet; Screenplay Harry S. Longstreet; Lead Actors JoBeth Williams, Anthony John Denison In this thriller from Universal's small-screen stable an ex-con (Denison) teams up with a double-crossed hooker (Williams) to recover a fortune buried underneath a property.

Silent Victim

Director Menahem Golan; USA 1992; First Independent VA 20207; Certificate 15; 112 minutes; Producer Menahem Golan; Screenplay Nelly Adnil, Jonathan Platnick; Lead Actors Michele Greene, Kyle Secor, Ely Puget, Alex Hyde-White A woman loses her unborn child due to a failed suicide attempt and is prosecuted by her revolting husband.

Sins of Desire

Director Jim Wynorski; USA 1992; Reflective RE 7007; Certificate 18; 87 minutes; Producer Linda Borgeson; Screenplay Mark McGee, Peter Liapis; Lead Actors Tanya Roberts,

Caught in the act

Throughout its history, British cinema has been skewered on the horns of an all-too familiar dilemma, one whose origins are economic, but which can equally well be expressed in aesthetic terms, and can even be expanded to encompass acting styles. To put it crudely, the industry is caught between excess and restraint; a *will-to-hubris* and a *will-to-parochialism*. Two films which together encapsulate this tension are the London Films extravaganza, *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933) and the quintessential Ealing picture, *The Blue Lamp* (1950). The perennial but unanswerable question was whether film-makers should stick to producing modest, low-budget movies which had at least a chance of making their money back in the domestic market, or whether they should risk shooting extravagant, prestige pictures which would need to be sold abroad if they were to turn any sort of profit. Did Britain want a national cinema or an international cinema? Did Britain want to nurture character actors or foster a star system of its own? In one corner, championing the small-scale, expertly crafted British film was Michael Balcon. In the other were Rank, Korda and co, who still seemed to think it was eminently possible for them to buy their way onto the world stage.

Parochial cinema

A year or two ago, I interviewed the ex-Ealing editor and ACT Vice-President, Sidney Cole, and I remember him bristling when I stood up for the Korda-style “prestige picture” and suggested that the last thing cinemagoers wanted in 1946 was to be force-fed a diet of 200 or more low-budget, parochial British features. This was the production target the ACT had set, but there hardly seemed the depth of talent, the studio space or the materials to realise it unless the industry wanted to get back to making quota quickies. Cole, though, was adamant that stilted, star-led extravaganzas such as *London Town* and *Caesar and Cleopatra* represented a complete dead-end. “Just by spending a lot of money and using American stars, you can’t guarantee success,” he protested “You don’t have to be narrowly parochial, but if you start off making films that are within the cultural ambience of your community, you are more likely to be successful.” This, in a nutshell, was the Ealing philosophy, and was reflected in the downbeat, naturalistic character-based acting style the studio often seemed to encourage. The average Ealing picture simply couldn’t accommodate a star performance: Balcon and his crew valued consensus, decency and collectivity over raw individualism. This is made only too clear in *The Blue Lamp*, where police and criminals alike combine to flush out the “immature delinquent”, played by Dirk Bogarde, who refuses to abide by the mythical code which cements together good and bad, rich and poor alike. T.E.B. Clarke’s script, the historian Charles Barr



Dirk Bogarde in ‘The Blue Lamp’

notes, “rests on a daydream of universal benevolence,” but sometimes the harmony seems slightly forced. Rock ‘n’ roll, teen culture and Elvis Presley are only a few years away, and there are all sorts of hints that the times are about to change; that the way of life the film celebrates is already under threat. In his key role as PC George Dixon, Jack Warner is modesty incarnate; the hallmarks of his performance are quietness and dignity. It’s hard to think of a single scene where he raises his voice or moves at anything other than a steady plod. Even when Bogarde confronts him with a gun, Dixon hardly betrays a flicker of emotion – he walks straight into a barrage of shots and dies with the same impassive, cheerful expression on his face. Flashiness and ambition aren’t words in his lexicon. In many ways, with his love of flowers, his singing and his darts playing, Dixon is the kind of idealised Englishman described by Orwell in the early pages of *The Lion and the Unicorn*. Everything about him betokens self-effacement and restraint, and it is only appropriate that he should have ended up on the small screen.

Larger than life

If Jack Warner can be regarded as a fine exponent of the miniaturist school of British screen acting, Korda’s great emissary, Charles Laughton, follows an altogether different tradition. Korda seemed to see him as an exuberant, human battering ram with which to break open the door of the American market. There is nothing remotely self-effacing about Laughton. He roars and bellows, acts with his jowls and embonpoint, and demands that people take notice. In *The Private Life of Henry VIII* he barnstormed his way across America, helping the film take more than \$2.5 million and winning an Oscar in the process. As the portly king, he was like the freak at a circus sideshow; his sheer, unbridled extravagance of voice and gesture, combined with his alarming physical presence, made him an unmissable star turn. His performance combined what John Grierson has described as “the native vitality and vulgarity of the English music hall” with

the bombast of the old actor-manager. Even if it was overblown, at least he went at it hammer and tongs which can hardly be said of many other British stars of the period, who affected to regard cinema as a bastard medium and acted as if they were wearing pegs on their noses.

A prime example of the character actor as star, Laughton never seemed manacled by class or convention, but could play lawyers, hunchbacks and artists with equal aplomb, and managed to combine theatre and cinema careers on both sides of the Atlantic. Watching him on screen, it is hard not to be reminded of Freud’s phrase, “His majesty the child.” He has all the blubbery petulance, incontinence, rage and charm of a vastly oversized baby. This sense of grotesque infantilism is perhaps brought out most pointedly in David Lean’s *Hobson’s Choice* (1954), also made under Korda’s auspices. Here, he plays a curmudgeonly old bootshop owner, a sort of Lancashire King Lear, whose every domestic need is catered for by his three daughters. We see him undressed, put to bed, fed, washed and pampered. When he doesn’t get what he wants, he either sulks or blusters angrily. Making a grand entrance, he lurches drunkenly into his own shop, announcing his arrival with a prolonged burp.

At times, the film is like a silent comedy, with Laughton’s funny walks, drunken antics and comic business underpinned by bassoon rumbles on the soundtrack. He has an unerring instinct for boorishness and pantomime. This is as fundamental a characteristic of British cinema as its well-charted reserve; in Laughton’s ridiculous but occasionally glorious bombast, we can see an instinct which was shared not merely by writers, directors and actors, but by the industry as a whole, which is nothing if not quixotic in its behaviour. Whether it be the Archers building a stairway to heaven, Oscar Deutsch’s manic construction spree, which saw Odeons sprouting up like mushrooms, or Korda’s elaborate plans to conquer the American market, the history of British film is as much one of hubris as of restraint. It’s instructive to read Jeffrey Dell’s satirical novel *Nobody Ordered Wolves* (1939) side by side with that account of the turbulent Goldcrest years, *My Indecision is Final*. In the former, Korda is caricatured as Napoleon Bott, head of Paradox Film Productions, an ambitious but unruly outfit which soon spirals out of control, leaving bankers, technicians and everybody else utterly confused as to what is happening. The story ends with a pack of wolves, which nobody can remember ordering but blithely assumes must be for some jungle movie, scavenging through the studios. Admittedly, Goldcrest couldn’t quite match this, but they showed, 50 years after Korda, that British ambition and will to chaos was still marvellously intact. *The ‘Blue Lamp’ and ‘Hobson’s Choice’ are available on Warner Home Video*

Jay Richardson, Delia Sheppard, Jan Michael Vincent

Trash-king Wynorski clocks up more sleaze points in this silly sex and sci-fi offering. A randy doctor and his lesbian wife run a clinic where impotent men can ogle leather-clad women. The heroine of the story (Roberts) infiltrates their lair and has sex with Delia Sheppard so as to cover her tracks.

S.I.S.

Director Mark L. Lester; USA 1992; Reflective RE 7008; Certificate 18; 96 minutes; Producer Frank Sacks; Screenplay Frank Sacks, Robert Boris; Lead Actors Scott Glenn, Lou Diamond Phillips, Chelsea Field, Yaphet Kotto Mark Lester’s gun-toting thriller reputedly incurred the wrath of the Los Angeles police, whose ‘Special Investigation Section’ – an elite team who catch repeat offenders and dispense rough justice – it is based on. Scott Glenn lends weight as a world-weary lieutenant showing the ropes to a new recruit (Phillips) who ultimately betrays him. Lester’s direction is leaden and the script, while raising some intriguing moral questions, lacks subtlety or grace. Gripping, however, because of its grounding in fact.

Sweet Justice

Director Allen Ployne; USA 1991; Columbia TriStar CVT 21665; Certificate 15; 90 minutes; Producers Jim Alex, Carol Marcus Plone; Screenplay Allen Plone, Jim Tabilio; Lead Actors Marc Singer, Finn Carter, Frank Gorshin, Mickey Rooney A peculiar mix of the off-beat and the stodgy. A crack team of women martial artists avenge the murder of a sister and save a hick town from pollution by an entrepreneur. Ployne’s direction of the fight sequences is uncertain, while his handling of key character development scenes is sensitive. The cast are of variable quality, but they avoid the overstatement typical of this genre.

Treacherous

Director Kevin Brodie; USA 1993; Medusa MC 406; Certificate 18; 89 minutes; Producer Stephen Strick; Screenplay Kevin Brodie; Lead Actors C. Thomas Howell, Adam Baldwin, Tia Carrere Dull and predictable nonsense, which even the presence of Tia Carrere (*Wayne’s World*) can’t save. After an accident cripples his partner, a racing driver retires to run a luxurious beach hotel. Cue financial pressures, a nasty business rival and a happy ending.

Retail

Alphaville:

Une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution

Director Jean-Luc Godard; France/Italy 1965; Connoisseur Video CR 142; Price £15.99; B/W; Subtitles; Certificate PG Godard’s *film noir*, American pulp fiction and science fiction pastiche revolves around a slim tale of a private eye, Lemmy Caution, who is in pursuit of Professor Nofératu in a city where love and individuality are banned. Godard’s selective shots of Paris and the imaginative use of lighting with which he constructs a futuristic metropolis are striking. (MFB No. 388)

Angel
Director Neil Jordan; Eire 1982; Channel 4 VA 30400; Price £12.99; Certificate 15
Channel 4's new video label is fittingly launched with the debut movie of one of Film on Four's most successful graduates. Neil Jordan's direction has never been better than in this lean, haunting thriller which has a saxophonist (Stephen Rea) seeking out the perpetrators of a bombing which killed his band's manager and a deaf teenage friend. (MFB No. 586)

Bambi
Director David Hand; USA 1942; Walt Disney D209422; Price £14.99; Certificate U
The highlights of this Disney animation classic are the change of seasons and the realisation of a thunderstorm and a snowstorm. The story follows Bambi's early life through to buckhood. The quality and detail of image are diminished by the small screen. (S&S August 1993)

Blow-Up
Director Michelangelo Antonioni; Italy/UK 1966; Warner S050015; Price £12.99; Certificate 15
Blow-Up's 60s iconography may look hilariously dated (as does David Hemmings' attitude) but the mystery and the surreal games Antonioni plays with our perception of images can still hold today's audience. Hemmings plays a fashion photographer who snaps his way through a trendy scene of drugs, models and parties and seemingly becomes a witness to a murder. (MFB No. 401)

Candyman
Director Bernard Rose; USA 1992; Columbia TriStar CVR 34073 (Widescreen)/24073; Price £12.99; Certificate 18
(S&S March 1993) 

The Chess Players (Shatranj ke Khilari)
Director Satyajit Ray; India 1977; Art House AHO6035; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate PG
Two lazy noblemen indulge their obsession for chess while around them a larger game of political manoeuvres is played out. The acting and slow build-up of atmosphere are both superb in what some consider to be Ray's finest achievement. (MFB No. 542)

Un Chien Andalou
Directors Luis Buñuel/Salvador Dali; France 1928; Connoisseur Video CR 129; Price £15.99; B/W; Silent; Certificate 15
Buñuel's legendary debut is released here in two versions on the same tape. The first has a soundtrack recorded in Paris in 1960 featuring Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* and flamenco music which Buñuel used in the original screenings. The second features an original score by modernist German composer Mauricio Kagel. (MFB No. 419)

Death in Venice
Director Luchino Visconti; Italy/France 1971; Warner S011060; Price £12.99; Certificate 15
Beautiful realisation of Thomas Mann's novella about the elusiveness of classical beauty. A dying German composer spends his last days fixated by a teenage boy who is staying at the same Venetian hotel. Criminally, still in a panned-and-scanned version. (MFB No. 447)

Don'sParty
Director Bruce Beresford; Australia 1976; Art House AHP5005; Price £15.99; Certificate 18
A hilarious adaptation of David Williamson's play about a drunken, bawdy party which takes place in the Sydney suburbs on the eve of an Australian election. The movie resembles a boorish version of Mike Leigh's *Abigail's Party*, showing the same disrespect for its characters. (MFB No. 541)

Don't Look Now
Director Nicolas Roeg; UK 1973; Warner S038087; Price £10.99; Certificate 18
Welcome video re-release of Roeg's atmospheric pyschological thriller in which a couple (Julie Christie, Donald Sutherland) go to Venice to forget the accidental drowning of their daughter and find themselves in even deeper water. This version is poorly panned-and-scanned. (MFB No. 477)

The Firemen's Ball (Hori, má panenka)
Director Milos Forman; Czechoslovakia/Italy 1967; Tartan Video TVT 1123; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
Hit-and-miss comedy which centres on a provincial firemen's ball whose chaotic start gets steadily worse. In this satire on petty bureaucracy, a raffle, a beauty contest and a presentation all go horribly wrong. Worth watching for the excellent moments of human observation. (MFB No. 420)

1492: Conquest ofParadise
Director Ridley Scott; 1992; Guild GLD 51432; Price £10.99; Certificate 15
(S&S November 1992)

The Heartbreak Kid
Director Elaine May; USA 1992; MIA V3384; Price £10.99; Certificate PG
May made the well-observed comedies *A New Leaf* and this scathing satire on the state of modern marriage before falling from grace with *Ishtar*. Charles Grodin falls out of love with newlywed wife Jeannie Berlin (Elaine May's daughter and the stealer of the show) en route to their honeymoon. (MFB No. 474)

Un homme et une femme
Director Claude Lelouche; France 1966; Warner S011655; Price £12.99; Subtitles; Certificate PG
Lelouch had a huge international hit with this low-budget romance, as well as running off with the top prizes at Cannes and the Oscars. A widower falls for a widow while visiting the seaside. The sepia footage was apparently the result of the budget running out. (MFB No. 398)

Honeymoon in Vegas
Director Andrew Bergman; USA 1992; First Independent RE 9000; Price £10.99; Certificate 15
(S&S March 1993)



Buñuel's 'Un Chien Andalou'

Indecent Proposal
Director Adrian Lyne; USA 1993; Paramount VHR 2790; Price £13.99; Certificate 15
(S&S June 1993) 

The Iron Petticoat
Director Ralph Thomas; UK 1956; Fabulous BCC 04064; Price £10.99; Certificate U
A routine re-make of *Ninotchka*. Bob Hope plays an air force officer who grounds a woman Mig pilot (Katharine Hepburn) and then tries to win her round to the joys of capitalism. (MFB No. 272)

The Lacemaker (La Dentellière)
Director Claude Goretta; France 1977; Arrow AV 0005; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
Isabelle Huppert made her mark in this popular, well-played if slight account of a first love that is ill-matched from the start. While on holiday, an 18-year-old Parisian hairdresser falls in love with a university student and suffers a breakdown after they part. (MFB No. 526)

Lady Caroline Lamb
Director Robert Bolt; UK/Italy/USA 1972; Warner S038256; Price £10.99; Certificate 15
Lacklustre period melodrama with Sarah Miles playing Lady Caroline Lamb, who disgraced her celebrated peer husband in the early nineteenth century by having an affair with Lord Byron. (MFB No. 468)

Leap of Faith
Director Richard Pearce; USA 1992; Paramount VHR 2742; Price £10.99; Certificate PG
(S&S April 1993) 

The Lie (Mensonge)
Director François Margolin; France 1993; Tartan Video TVT 1125; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Widescreen; Certificate 15
Emma (Nathalie Baye) is a successful journalist living with her partner Charles (Didier Sandre) in Paris. While he is away on business, Emma receives confirmation that she is not only pregnant but also HIV-positive. Since she has never been unfaithful in the ten years of their affair, Emma sets out to find the reason. Her quest allows the director to question the nature of human relationships. (S&S November 1993)

Lift to the Scaffold (L'Ascenseur pour l'échafaud)
Director Louis Malle; France 1957; Electric Pictures EP 0053; Price £15.99; B/W; Subtitles; Certificate PG
Malle's impressive debut feature is excellently handled – from the suspense scenes to the improvised jazz score which Miles Davis and friends played while watching a screening. A young man (Maurice Ronet) kills his boss with the help of the victim's wife (Jeanne Moreau). (MFB No. 316)

Like Water for Chocolate (Como agua para chocolate)
Director Alfonso Arau; Mexico 1991; Electric Pictures EP 0051; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
A warm-hearted and highly watchable melodrama which is rich in Mexican folklore. A pair of star-crossed lovers are unable to consummate their love because of a rigid turn-of-the-century social system. A young woman (Lumi Cavazos) who is forbidden to marry, discovers that the way to the heart is through the stomach and sets about trying to influence others and liberate herself through her culinary expertise. (S&S October 1993)

Lonely Hearts
Director Paul Cox; Australia 1981; Art House AHP 5006; Price £15.99; Certificate 15
Quirky romance about two offbeat characters, Peter and Patricia (Norman Kaye, Wendy Hughes) who fall in love for the first time. Funny, touching and acutely observed. (MFB No. 608)

The Magic Box
Director John Boulting; UK 1951; Warner S038256; Price £10.99; B/W; Certificate U
Well-meaning if turgid historical piece where the stars were rolled out for a series of cameos to honour the unsung cinema pioneer William Friese-Greene. (MFB No. 213)

The Man Between
Director Carol Reed; UK 1953; Warner S038300; Price £10.99; B/W; Certificate U
Mediocre thriller about a West Berlin racketeer (James Mason) whose achilles heel is his love for two women. (MFB No. 238)

Masculin Féminin
Director Jean-Luc Godard; France/Sweden 1966; Connoisseur Video CR 141; Price £15.99; B/W; Subtitles; Certificate 15
Paul (Jean-Pierre Léaud) is just out of the army and asks all the right questions for a young pre-May '68 Parisian. He falls for aspiring pop singer Madeleine (Chantal Goya), whose consumerist obsessions reflect Godard's increasing misogyny. The film is divided into 15 segments, each accompanied by a caption and a ricochet. The film can be seen as a watershed between Godard's Hollywood homages and his interest in political film-making. (MFB No. 403)

Mean Streets
Director Martin Scorsese; USA 1973; Electric Pictures EP 0027; Price £12.99; Certificate 18
(S&S April 1993)

A Midnight Clear
Director Keith Gordon; USA 1991; Columbia TriStar CVR 24221; Price £12.99; Certificate 15
(S&S April 1993)

Mo' Money
Director Peter Macdonald; USA 1992; Columbia TriStar CVR 23660; Price £10.99; Certificate 15
(S&S December 1992) 

The Navigator: A Medieval Odyssey
Director Vincent Ward; New Zealand 1988; Art House AHP 5004; Price £15.99; B/W & Colour; Certificate PG
A young man sets out on a pilgrimage to save his village from the plague, and in the process reaches the present day. Allusions to Christ, Aids and the films of Ingmar Bergman abound, but it's the film-maker's individual style that dazzles. (MFB No. 664)

Night of the Living Dead
Director Tom Savini; USA 1990; Tartan Video TVT 1024; Price £15.99; Widescreen; Certificate 18
(S&S April 1993)

Of Mice and Men
Director Gary Sinise; USA 1992; MGM/UA S052693; Price £10.99; Certificate PG
(S&S January 1993)

One False Move
Director Carl Franklin; USA 1992; Columbia TriStar CVR 23517; Price £10.99; Certificate 18
(S&S April 1993)

WIND UP

By Peter Dean

● A murderer blasts a man in the chest with a a double-barrelled shotgun. He stands over the body and fires a second shot in the man's face, smiling as he does so. The film is *Boiling Point* and it carries a 15 certificate on video. Because of a quirk in the certification of video, this is the same rating that *Mrs Doubtfire* and *Jurassic Park* will receive on their video release – if the quirk remains. At present, while films can be rated 12, no such certification exists on video. When the new certificate was introduced for films in this country, with *Madame Sousatzka* and subsequently *Batman*, the video industry decided not to use it. Video movers and shakers felt that the 12 rating would allow more bad language into homes (the main cause of complaint in broadcasting surveys) and create a headache for video store owners who have problems enough distinguishing a 17-year-old from an 18-year-old, let alone an 11- from a 12-year-old. Video executives also hoped to send a message



Certification hiccup: 'Mrs Doubtfire'

back to the Hollywood community that bad language in family films wasn't wanted. Despite these reservations, it now looks as if video execs are ready to introduce the 12 rating – following a decision by the government last year to insert a 'due diligence' clause into the Video Recordings Act ensuring that video store owners are no longer liable to a £5,000 fine if videos are rented to under age customers. Sounds a big deal about nothing? Not if you consider the size of the fine and the fact that when the tabloid press wants a story about loose standards they often send an under-age kid to rent a 15-rated movie such as *Boiling Point*. If the 12 rating for video is accepted, it will also remove the ridiculous scenario of having a *Mrs Doubtfire* as 15 and the situation in which 12- to 15-year-olds cannot see a film on video that they can see either at the cinema or on television.

Since it is well known that videos with long running times do poor rental business, it is not surprising that the press release for 'Blood In, Blood Out', the three-hour opus of Taylor Hackford, omits the running time. Its selling points are listed thus: "The film has been granted an 18 certificate and this classification accounts for almost 30 per cent of video rentals and there is no doubt that it will be a winner too. The film is in the same mould as other video rental successes inspired by gangland and prison backgrounds – 'An Innocent Man', 'GoodFellas', 'Godfather Part 3'." What?

● And still on Wind Up's favourite subject... the video games industry is to

clean up its image by submitting games to the BBFC for ratings. Sony has just received a 15 certificate for its interactive CD movie *Ground Zero Texas*, which has 70 minutes of film featuring live actors, special effects, locations and so on. Director is Dwight Little the man who lensed *Marked for Death* and *Halloween 4*. Things get even more complicated further down the line. A prototype interactive music disc for West Coast thrash metal band Nine Inch Nails is "a way of releasing videos that are banned and getting round censorship," says its publisher. The disc is randomly encoded which means only a computer whizz can get into the disc's programme. Whether the BBFC examiner is computer-literate is another question. Watch this space.

Do the powerbrokers care about video? Not according to the director John Landis. "Trading Places' is a beautifully photographed film but the videotape and disc look like shit", he says. "Very little care is taken over the transfer of the master print to the video... they don't care: 'Oh by the way, we just shipped 300,000 tapes of your film', they say. 'An American Werewolf in London' looks terrible on tape. With 'Blues Brothers' they just made a new laser disc transfer that I still think is too bright but it's vastly superior to the old video one." For his latest film 'Innocent Blood', Landis was allowed to supervise the video transfer of his film, thanks to a new clause introduced into contracts by the Directors Guild of America stipulating that directors have to be invited to the video transfer. Landis is happy now: "It's very discouraging – they always want everything so bright. The guys at Video House kept getting upset with me. I'm known as the Prince of Darkness."

● A new video range is getting back to basics. Called *The Practical Guide to...* this six tape range of 'how to' videos is designed to "be entertaining and informative, and to put you in the picture on some of life's biggest decisions." Of the six videos, for example, two are designed to help you buy and service your car while the tricky subject of sorting out a broken-down marriage is covered by just one tape!

David Alton MP's sorry attempt to restrict the availability of 18-rated videos in the UK through an amendment to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill has one major flaw. In seeking to establish a new classification of 'not suitable for home viewing', David Alton overlooks the fact that the BBFC in its infinite wisdom already exercises draconian powers. 32 videos have been rejected outright by the BBFC including 'The Exorcist' and 'Straw Dogs'; and recently applications for video certification for 'Reservoir Dogs', 'Bad Lieutenant' and 'Mikey' have not been granted. (Alton also failed to mention that the BBFC has censored 342 films before awarding a 15 video certificate and 1,533 films before awarding an 18 video certificate). Trade sources indicate that the Home Office will not respond favourably to the MP's amendment because "It doesn't actually add anything to the law." Film aficionados can breathe a sigh of relief, together with BBFC director James 'Bligh' Ferman, anxious, no doubt, to have the glare of publicity switched off so he can get down to recruiting those new examiners.

● Following on from Disney's success last year with its video release of *The Jungle Book*, they are now set to release the classic *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* this autumn.

Orlando

Director Sally Potter; UK 1992; Electric Pictures EP 0034B; Price £22.49; Certificate PG (S&S March 1993)

Puerto Escondido

Director Gabriele Salvatores; Italy 1993; Curzon CV 0036; Price £15.99; Certificate 15
A Milanese assistant bank manager flees Italy after witnessing the murder of an officer by a fellow cop. He tries to relocate in an obscure Mexican town and finds happiness of sorts, even though his financial schemes meet with little success. An amiable follow-up to Salvatores' hit *Mediterraneo*. (S&S September 1993)

Rhubarb/The Bargee

Directors Eric Sykes/Duncan Wood; UK 1969/1964; Lumiere LUM 2103; Price £10.99; Certificate PG
In the virtually silent short *Rhubarb*, Harry Secombe, Eric Sykes, Jimmy Edwards, Hattie Jacques and others congregate on a golf course and say nothing but "rhubarb". *The Bargee* is a crude comedy about a ladies' man who is forced into a shotgun wedding after making a lock-keeper's daughter pregnant. (MFB Nos. 435/365)

Ruby Cairo

Director Graeme Clifford; USA 1992; Entertainment EVS 1117; Price £10.99; Certificate 15 (S&S June 1993)

Seems Like Old Times

Director Jay Sandrich; USA 1980; MIA V3375; Price £10.99; Certificate PG
Consistently funny Neil Simon sitcom which has Nick (Chevy Chase), a bank robber on the run, hiding from the police with his ex-wife Glenda (Goldie Hawn) and trying to keep out of sight of her new husband (Charles Grodin). (MFB No. 565)

A Short Film About Killing (Krótki Film o Zabijaniu)/A Short Film About Love (Krótki Film o Miłości)

Director Krzysztof Kieślowski; Poland 1988; Tartan Video TVT 1127; Price £16.99; Subtitles; Certificate IB
Theatrical versions of two of the best *Dekalog* commandments included in a box set with the director's *Dekalog* script. In the first, murder and capital punishment are equally condemned as a drifter senselessly murders a taxi driver and then is hanged for his crime. The second is a *Rear Window*-style tale of obsessive love in which a teenager falls in love with the single woman living opposite, whom he spies on with his telescope. (MFB Nos. 671/676)

Simple Men

Director Hal Hartley; UK/USA 1992; Tartan Video TVT 1023; Price £15.99; Widescreen; Certificate 15 (S&S December 1992)

Sneakers

Director Phil Alden Robinson; USA 1992; Universal VHR 1621; Price £13.99; Certificate 15 (S&S December 1992)

Stranger than Paradise

Director Jim Jarmusch; USA/West Germany 1984; Artificial Eye ART 086; Price £15.99; B/W; Certificate 15
Jarmusch's feature debut looks as cool as ever. John Lurie plays Willie, a loner



Three for the road: Edson, Balint, Lurie

whose 16-year-old Hungarian cousin Eva (Eszter Balint) comes to visit. Together with Eddie (Richard Edson), this odd group visit Florida where they encounter boredom, routine problems and bad luck as well as outrageous good fortune. A silly film for smart people. (MFB No. 610)

Tales of Ordinary Madness (Storie di ordinaria follia)

Director Marco Ferreri; France/Italy 1981; Art House AHO 6016; Price £15.99; Certificate 18
An alcoholic poet (Ben Gazzara) wallows in wine, women and more women in Venice Beach, LA. Based on Charles Bukowski's 'Erections, Ejaculations, Exhibitions and General Tales of Ordinary Madness', with Gazzara excelling as the grizzled writer and Ornella Muti adding a touch of much-needed beauty to the proceedings. (MFB No. 591)

Theorem (Teorema)

Director Pier Paolo Pasolini; Italy 1968; Connoisseur Video CR 144; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
Sensual, schematic and, at the time, shocking parable in which a stranger (Terence Stamp) arrives at a bourgeois Milanese household and, after seducing everyone, emotionally strips each member of the family. The son abandons his vocation as a painter, the mother starts a series of random sexual encounters, the daughter sinks into catatonia, the maid becomes a saint and the father hands his factory over to his workers. Beautiful, haunting and with an excellent enigmatic performance by Terence Stamp. (MFB No. 424)

The Three Sisters

Director Laurence Olivier; UK 1970; Warner S038253; Price £10.99; Certificate U
Sturdily-filmed Chekhov play aided by the likes of Laurence Olivier, Alan Bates, Joan Plowright and Derek Jacobi. Three daughters of a deceased Russian colonel dream of exchanging their dull provincial existence for life in the big city. (MFB No. 442)

Tokyo Story (Tokyo Monogatari)

Director Yasujiro Ozu; Japan 1953; Artificial Eye ART 087; Price £15.99; B/W; Subtitles; Certificate U
Ozu's masterly domestic drama concerns an elderly couple, Shukichi and Tomi Hirayama (Chishu Ryu, Chieko Higashiyama), who visit their married sons and daughters in Tokyo for the first time. Disillusioned and rejected, they contemplate a life of loneliness ahead as they realise that children are born to grow apart from their parents. (S&S February 1994)

Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at Sight and Sound, British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL Facsimile 071 436 2327

Schindler's List

From Barbara Henry

I would like to take issue with Simon Louvish's condescending assumption (S&S March) that the title of Thomas Keneally's *Schindler's Ark* was "presumably" changed for an American audience unable to cope with the word 'ark'. *Schindler's List* is a superior title; Yiddish and German speakers will understand its play on words, for in both languages, 'die List' means not simply 'list', but also 'a cunning trick'.

Wolfsen College, Oxford

Video damage

From David Gauntlett

While I am sure that the *Sight and Sound* letters pages can do without being bogged down in the interminable debate about the effects of screen violence, I feel that David Alton's wholly inaccurate representation of academic research in this area (S&S March) cannot be allowed to pass uncorrected. I have recently completed a comprehensive review of this vast amount of research as part of my PhD, and can confidently report that there is absolutely no convincing evidence that screen violence has any effect on real-life behaviour. Admittedly, some notorious American laboratory experiments in the 60s engineered some effects on young children's aggressive play, but their unnatural settings and strong experimenter-demand effects – where children do their best to please the researcher, who without comment shows them a film of a guy hitting an inflatable doll and then waits patiently for them in a room with an identical doll – have been widely criticised. Since then, much more sophisticated longitudinal studies have been conducted, which have clearly shown that watching violence on screen does not increase young people's aggression. The correlations between exposure to screen violence and aggressiveness which can be found are much more likely to be due to the interest which an already aggressive person may have in watching depictions of violence; the extensive research provides no reason to believe that the viewing causes the behaviour.

To base the classification of a video on "whether it contains scenes liable to damage a child", as Alton proposes, would be extremely unhelpful, even for Alton's own purposes. If "damage" meant causing the child to commit violent acts, then most state-of-the-art social science research would suggest that film classification should be scrapped altogether. If, on the other hand, "damage" meant anything that upsets a high court judge, then we can all expect to see our cultural heritage – at least in small-screen format – disappear forever.

*Institute of Communication Studies,
University of Leeds*

Tighter controls

A response, forwarded to S&S, from the Home Office to a question about video censorship raised by a constituent of Iain Sproat MP

As we are currently considering David Alton's proposal to amend the existing sys-

tem of video classification provided by the Video Recordings Act 1984, I am unable to comment on his proposal at this time. However, I can say that while we share the widespread concern about the effects of screen violence on the young, it is not our intention to impose excessive and unwarranted conditions on the video industry, nor to allow such conditions to be imposed. Obviously we would not give our support to any proposal for major change to the criminal law in this area without carefully considering the proposal and its possible effects.

The criminal law already provides stringent controls on videos and on obscene material. Under the Video Recordings Act 1984 all video works, apart from a small category of innocuous exempt material, must be submitted to the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) for classification. It is a criminal offence under the Act to supply or possess for supply a video which has not been classified by the BBFC. The maximum penalty for this offence is a £20,000 fine. It is also an offence under the Act to supply a video in breach of the age classification awarded. The maximum penalty for this offence is a £5,000 fine.

The BBFC is an independent body, and the government has no power to control or review its classification decisions. However, we do require the BBFC to follow certain guidelines when performing its statutory classification duties. These require the BBFC to take into account that videos are seen in the home and must therefore be classified more restrictively than cinema films. The BBFC must also seek to avoid classifying any work which would infringe the criminal law, particularly the Obscene Publications Act 1959. It is a criminal offence under the 1959 Act to publish an article whose effect, taken as a whole, is such as to tend to deprave and corrupt those likely to read, see or hear it. The classification of a particular work by the BBFC does not mean that the work could not then be considered obscene. In any individual case, this would be a matter for the courts to decide.

We are taking action in this session's Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill to give local authority trading standards officers stronger powers to enforce the Video Recordings Act. We will enable trading standards officers to investigate an entire chain of illegal video supply which is connected to supplies within their areas, and to bring all the related prosecutions in one magistrates' court. At present, these officers can only investigate Video Recordings Act offences committed within their local authority areas, and there are practical difficulties in acting against dealers operating wide distribution networks covering a number of different areas.

The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill will contain other provisions designed to strengthen the enforcement of our legal controls on obscene material and child pornography. These will create new police powers of search and seizure and a new power of arrest for obscenity and child pornography offences; increase the maximum penalty for the mere possession of child pornography to include a three-month prison sentence; and extend the law to cover simulated child pornography which is manufactured on computer. We

will also wish to consider carefully any recommendations made by the Home Affairs Select Committee as a result of its current enquiry into computer pornography.

Our proposals are firmly based on what the enforcement agencies have said will be most useful to them. I am confident that they represent an effective and entirely proportionate response to the current concern about the appalling trade in obscene material and child pornography.

David Maclean, Home Office, London

Saturday Night Live

From Jack Lechner

I hate to be picky about an otherwise intelligent article, but John Harkness' piece on *Saturday Night Live* in your Comedy Supplement (S&S March) completely scrambled the history of the show. At the risk of seeming like one of the humourless comedy boffins in Terry Johnson's play *Dead Funny*, I'll try to clear things up.

After the original golden age of Belushi, Murray *et al* – one of the most exciting programmes I've ever seen on American television – producer Lorne Michaels left SNL. The 1980 season was produced by Jean Doumanian, with the cast Harkness gives for "the 80s". This was the year in which absolutely nothing was funny, and in which Charles Rocket was fired on the spot for uttering the unutterable on live TV. With the exceptions of Eddie Murphy, Joe Piscopo and Tim Kazurinsky, this cast was entirely replaced the following year, along with Doumanian herself (who now produces Woody Allen's movies).

The next four years saw a revolving door of uneven talent under producer Dick Ebersol. These were the years when Murphy took off, and everything else stood still. When Murphy left the show in 1984, Ebersol sacked everyone and hired the stellar aggregation Harkness attributes to Michaels: Billy Crystal, Christopher Guest, Harry Shearer, Martin Short, and – for it is she – Pamela Stephenson. (The lone holdover was Jim Belushi, whose time on the show spans all these periods.) Lorne Michaels returned to the show the following year with the cast your article attributes to Doumanian (still with me?), including Joan Cusack, Robert Downey Jr, Randy Quaid and Dennis Miller. While Harkness can't remember anything about this period, I can – it was the last time SNL was remotely dangerous. The newly edgy material was received with low ratings and critical jeers, and within a year it was gone. The audience had grown younger during the wasteland years, and rather than finding a new audience – or regaining the older viewers who had moved on – the show became glib and safe. Cast members have come and gone since, but *Saturday Night Live* has never regained its daring – the feeling of watching your own generation break through the wall of schlock with chainsaws.

One last bit of American TV trivia: current mega-hit *Seinfeld* is actually the direct progeny of a short-lived SNL rip-off called *Fridays*. The cast included *Seinfeld*'s creator and principal writer, Larry David, as well as Michael Richards, whose 'Kramer' character descends from a recurring sketch on this otherwise (and mercifully) forgotten show.

Channel 4, London

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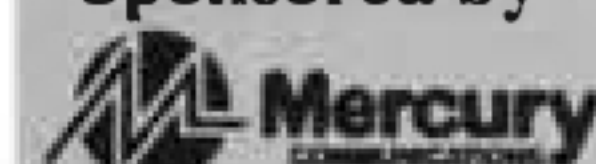
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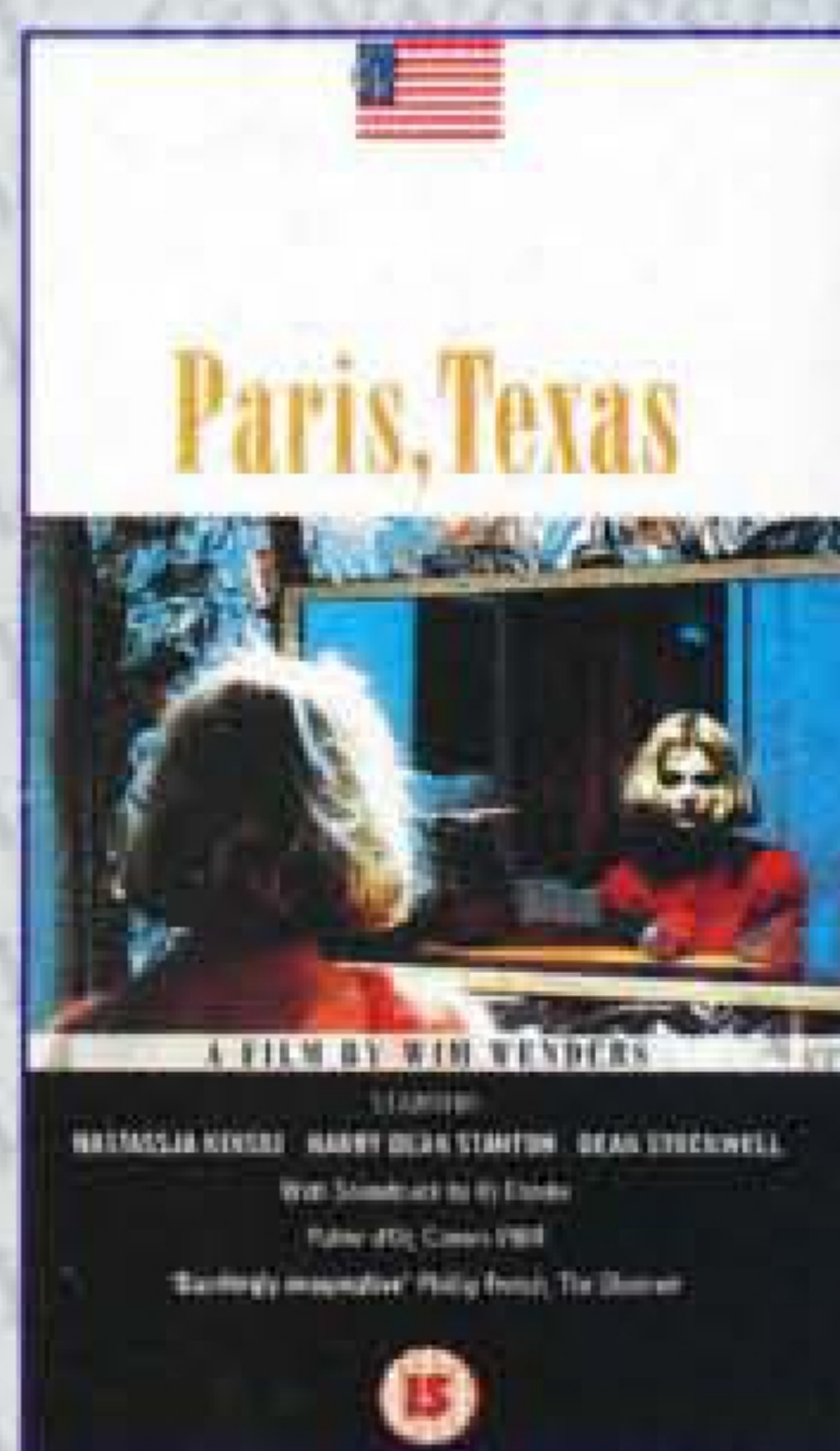
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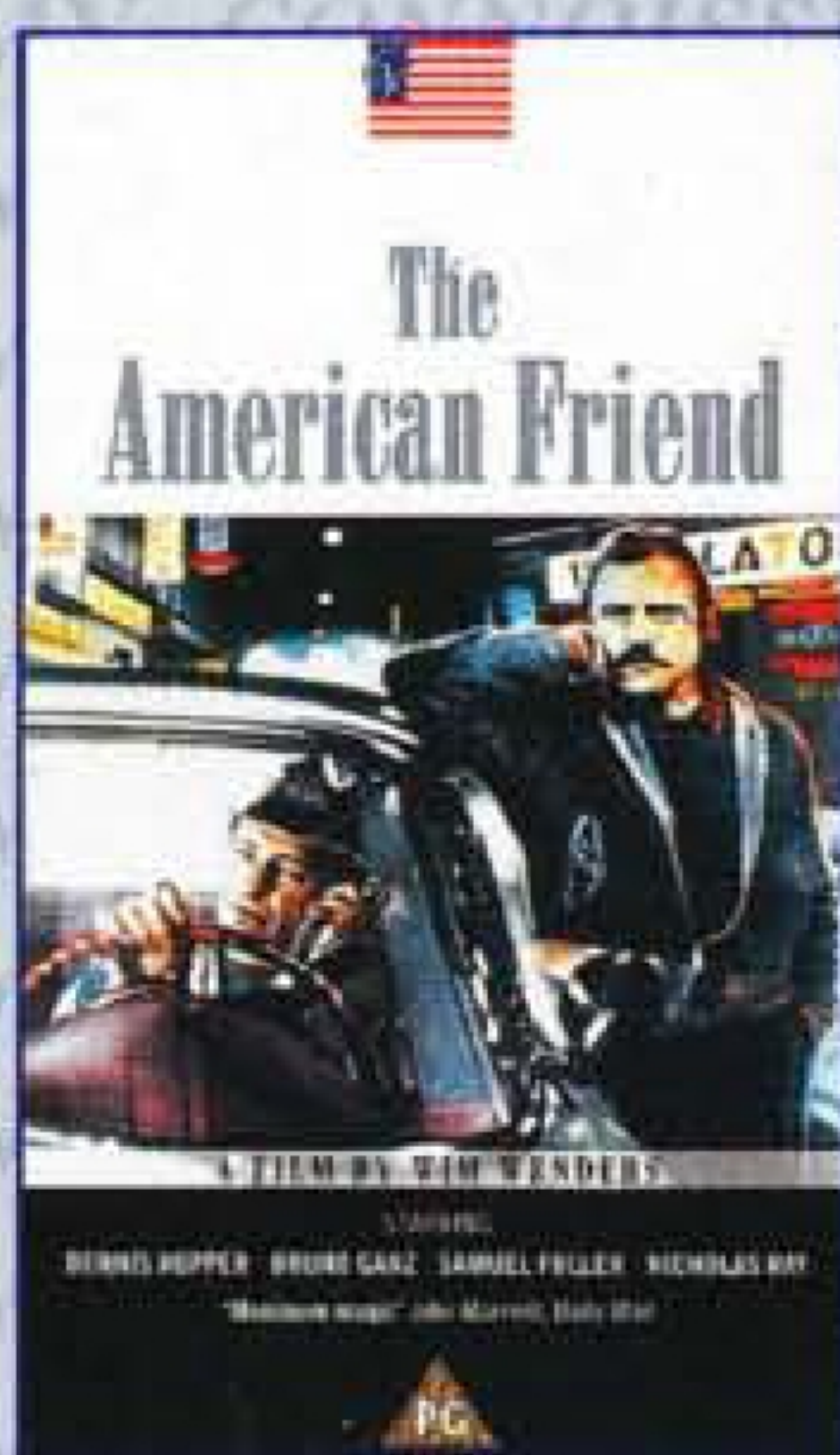


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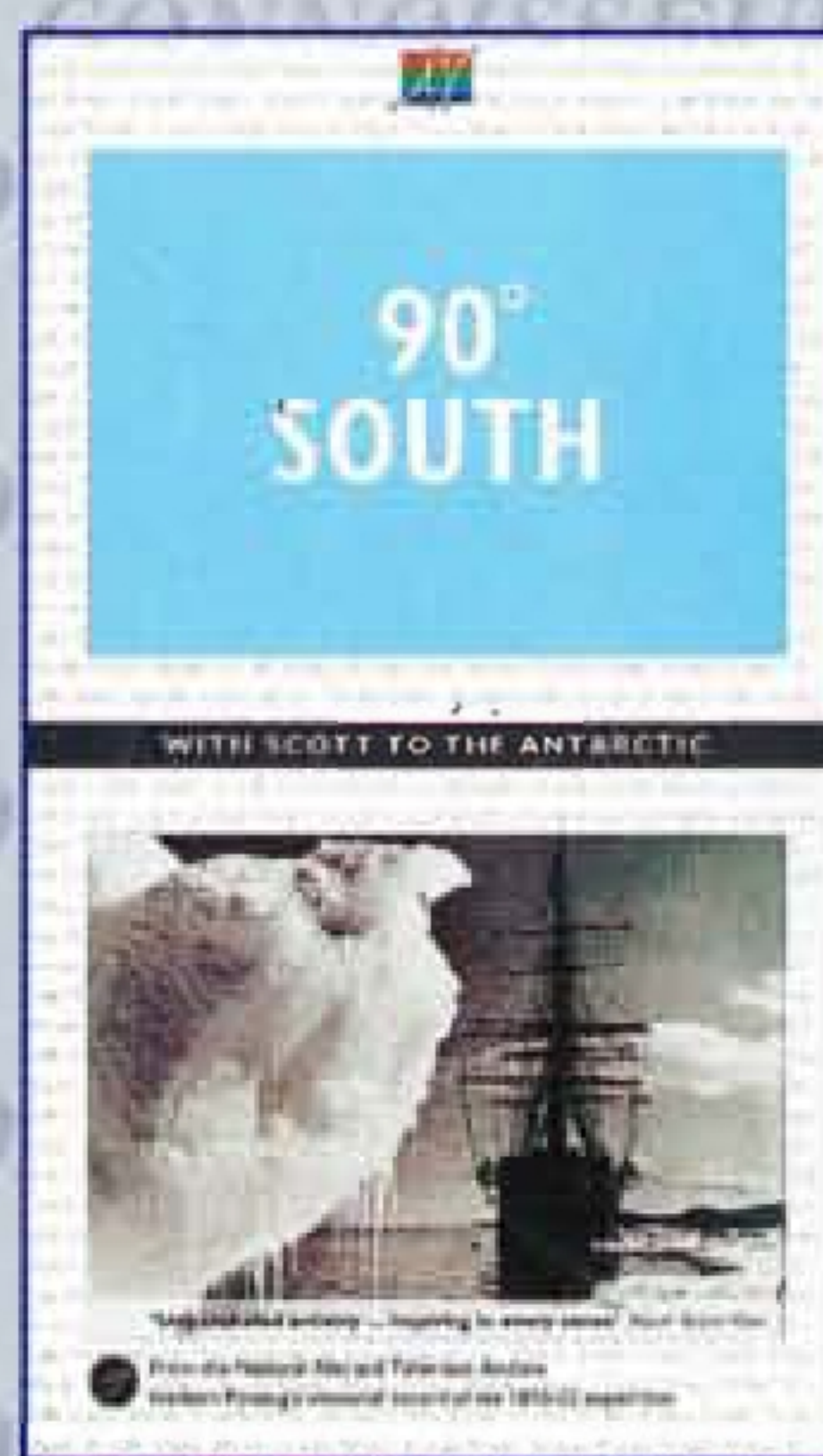
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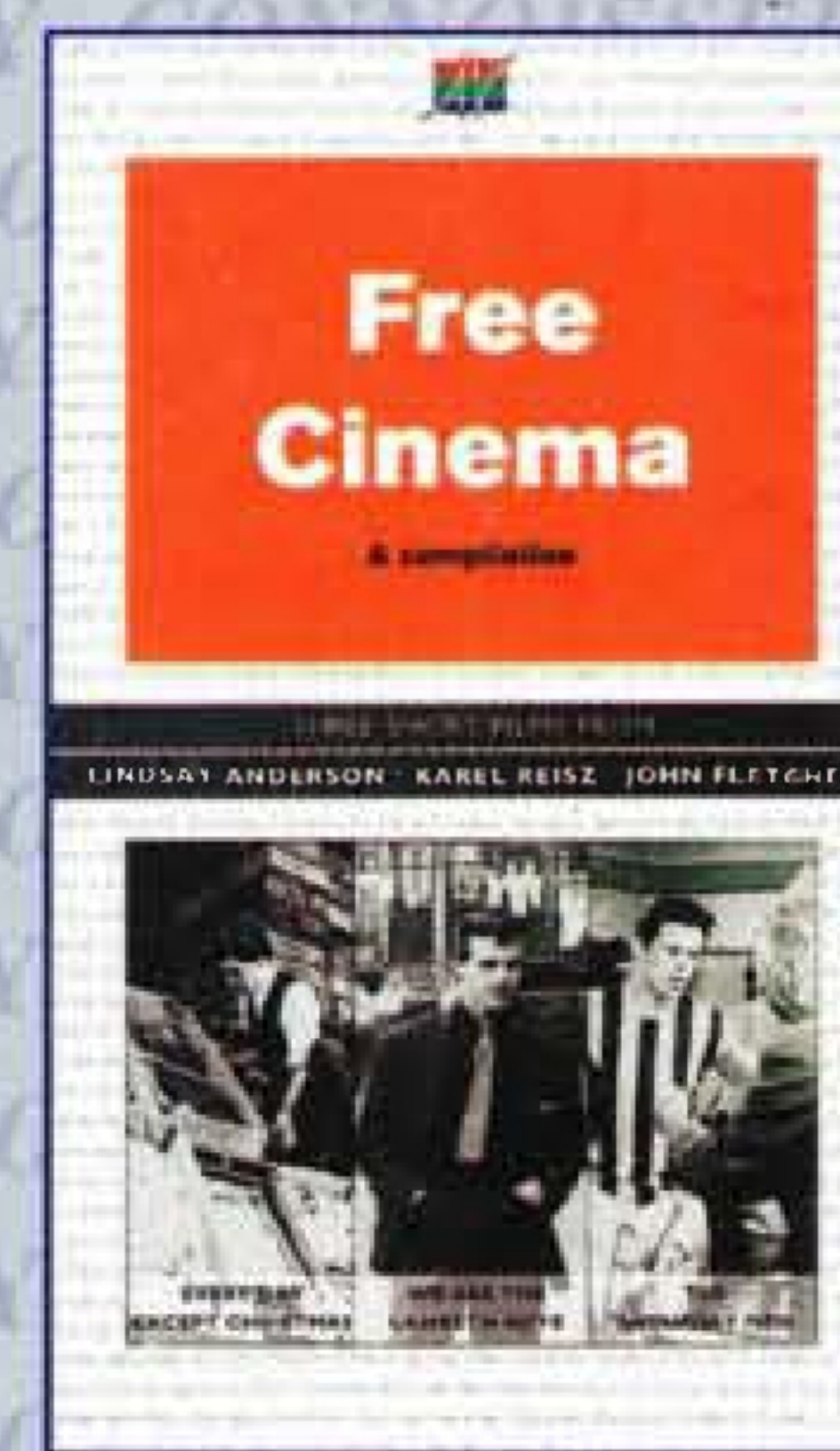
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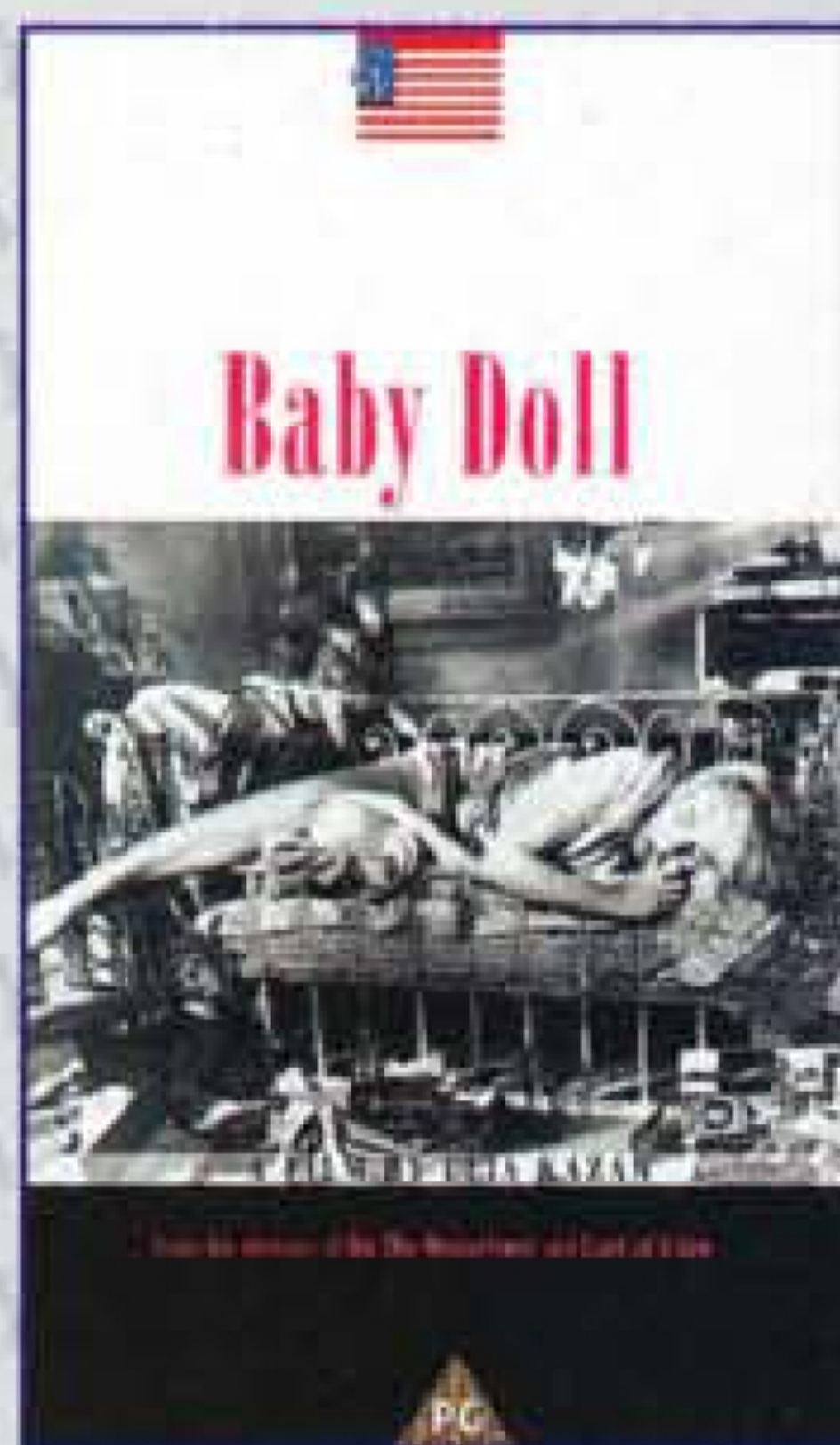
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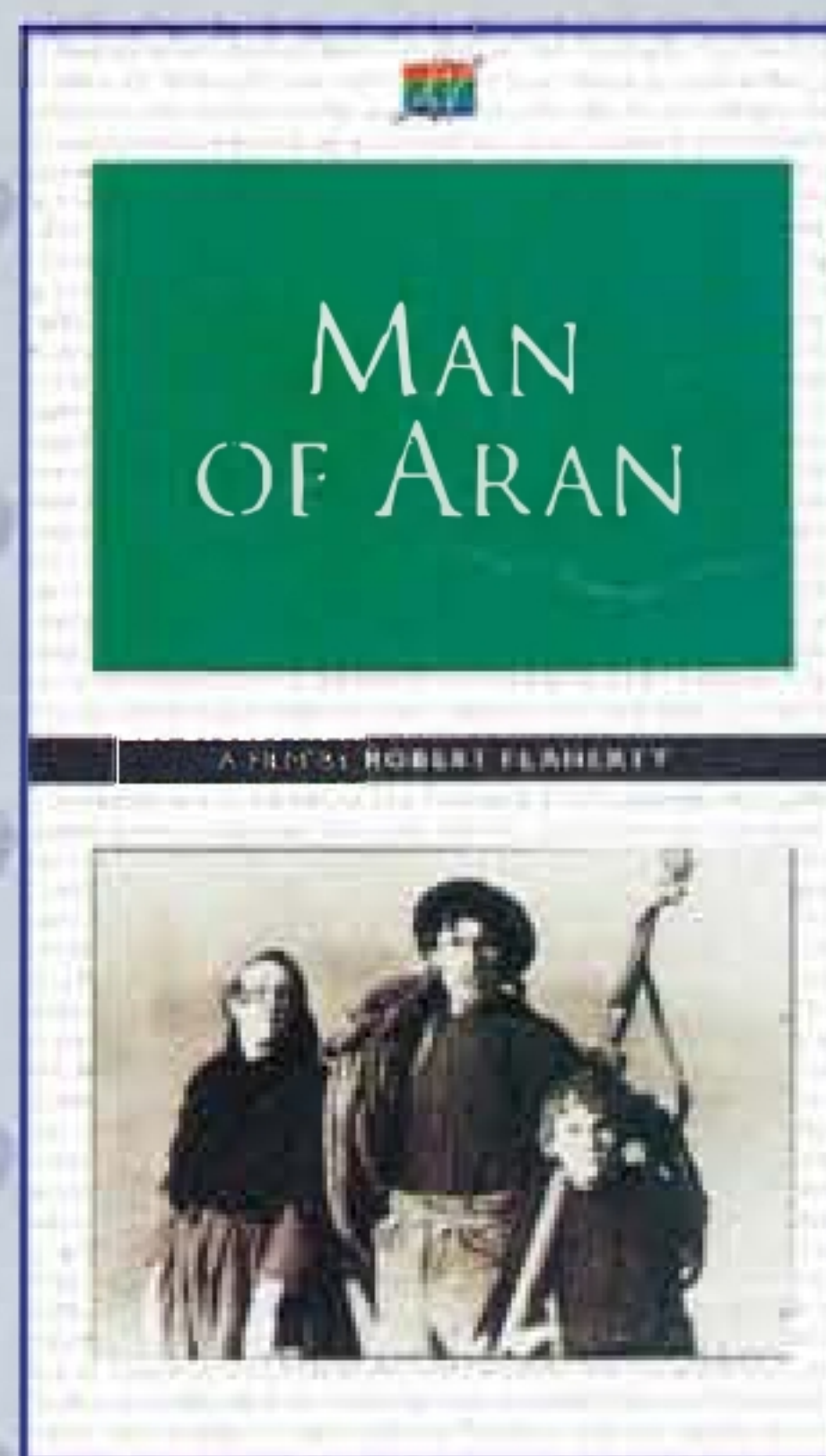
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